

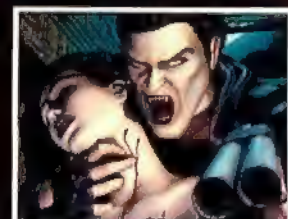
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WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE



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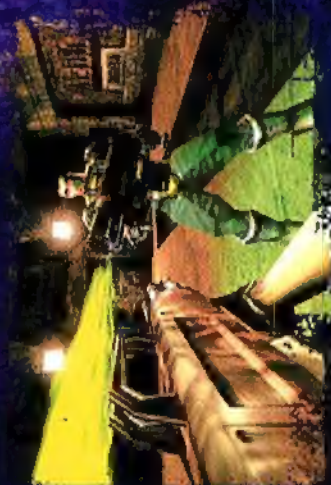


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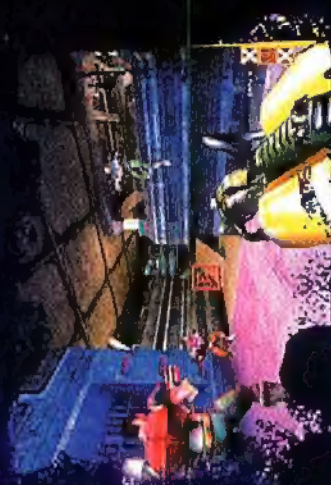
## TOURNAMENT™



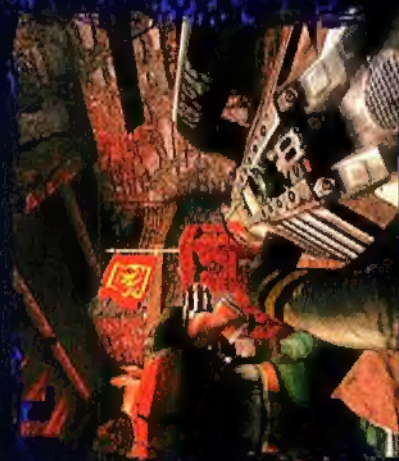
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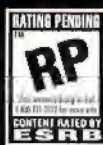
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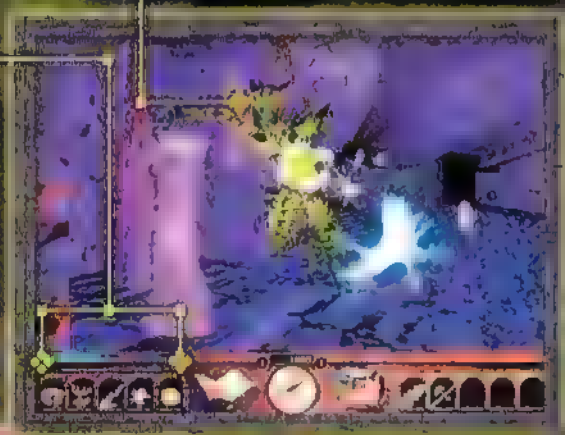


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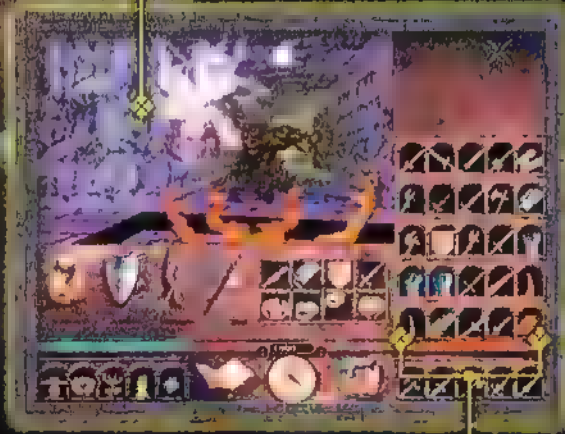
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A dramatic, low-angle shot of the Millennium Falcon flying through space. The ship is angled upwards from the bottom right towards the top left. Its metallic, weathered surface is highly detailed with various panels, pipes, and mechanical components. A bright blue and white energy trail or exhaust plume is visible behind the ship, suggesting high-speed travel. The background is a deep black space with some faint, distant starlight.

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# The CGW Premier Awards

**I**t was very hard work. We slaved, we sweated, we cried, we ate pizza. But when the hours of behind-closed-doors bickering and petty sniping had ended, we emerged, bleary-eyed, into the daylight, with envelopes in hand. Yes, it's time once again for CGW's Game of the Year Awards. We break it down by genre by genre, and present the overall Game of the Year for 1998. Oh yeah, we also have everyone's favorite: the year's worst games.

91

108

## The Horror, The Horror!

**K**eeep the lights on. Wear two pairs of pants. Head it with your mommy. Just do something to get ready to be scared, as CGW gets behind the scenes with these terrifying (and cool) new horror games—VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE, WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE, and NOCTURNE.

Cover photo of Angel Carter by Robert Houser. Makeup by Sherrie Long. Visit Angel's Web site at [www.bombshellempire.com](http://www.bombshellempire.com)

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Planescape: Torment



Magic & Mayhem



Man Of War II



Midtown Madness



Septerra Core

COVER STORY



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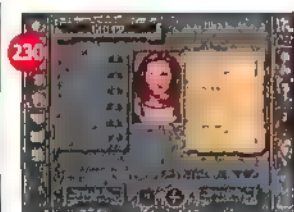
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Railroad Tycoon II



Baldur's Gate

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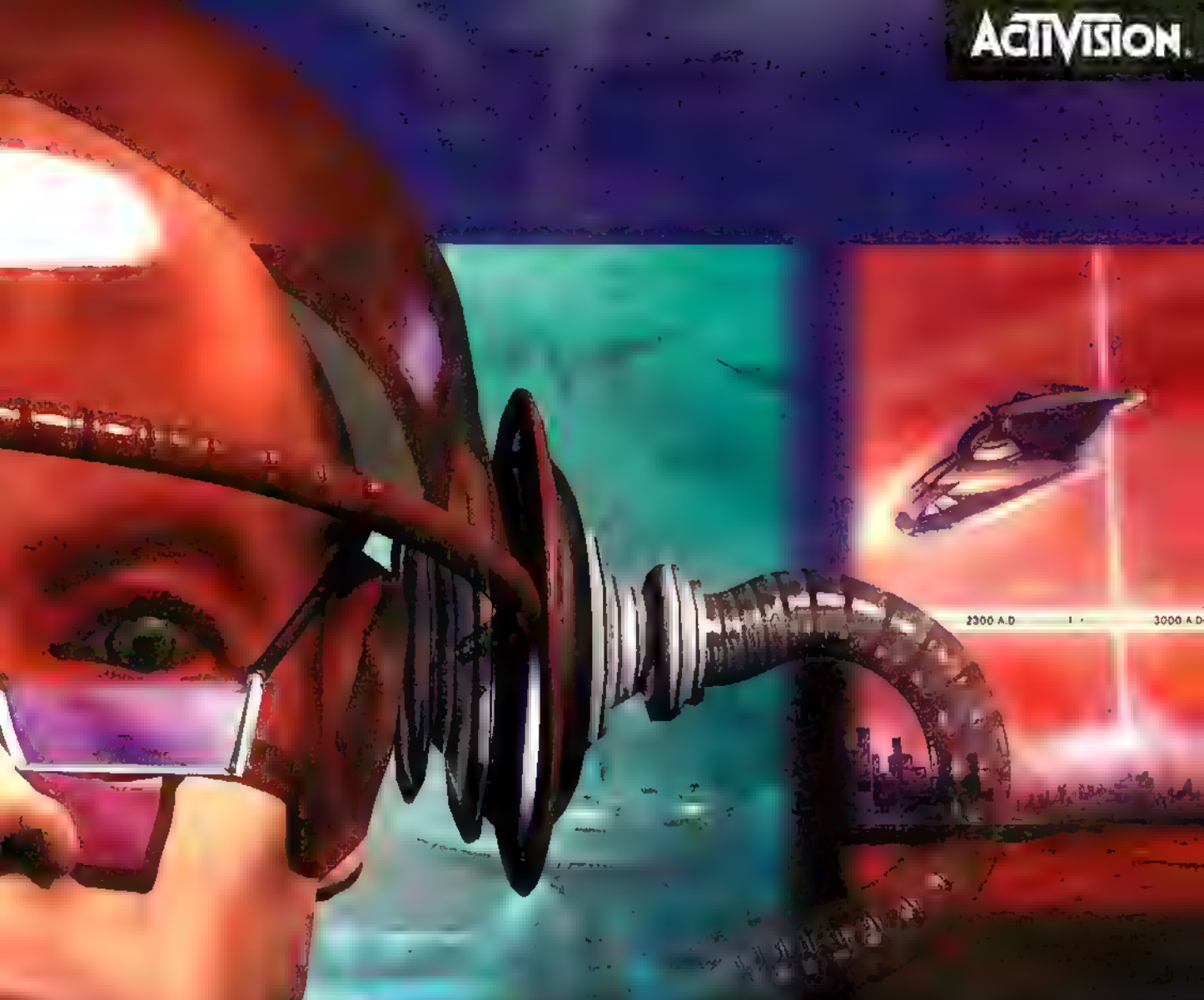
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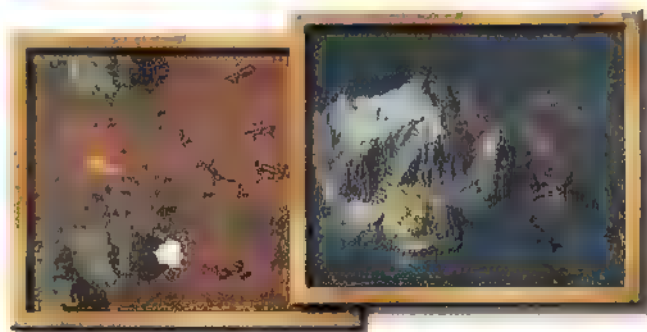
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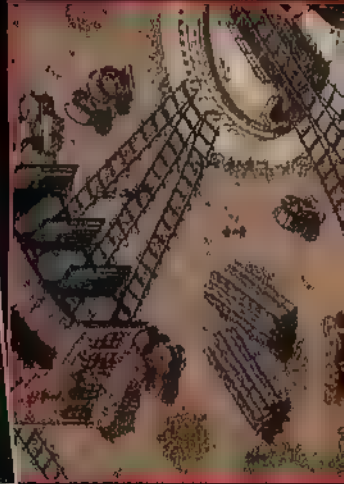
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# Eat Lead, Fritz!

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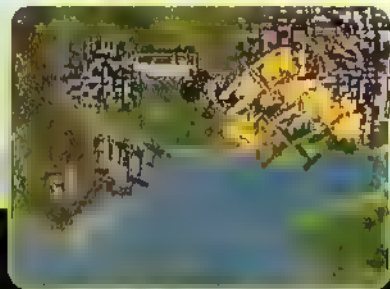
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# Look Out! Ole Mac Is Back

*Will Apple Really Reach the Core with New Initiative?*

I've just returned from the best medicine show I've seen since the last time I visited Knott's Berry Farm. At Knott's Berry Farm, Disneyland's little-known competitor "behind the Orange Curtain" of California's bastion of political conservatism, an actor plays the role of a con man selling some ungodly panacea for every ill known to man. He has rigged up some special effects to add credibility to his spiel, but it's pretty easy to see through the charade. At MacWorld (not to be confused with anyone's amusement park, since Macintosh enthusiasts take their machines seriously), it was difficult to separate the special effects from the test results.

Steve Jobs can be a fast-talking showman whose patter may well be the equivalent of a W.C. Fields role. His keynote address at MacWorld, demonstrating the superiority of the new PowerMac G3 with ATI Rage 128 as standard equipment, was such a show. He worked the crowd with an incredible mixture of polished showmanship and "Gee, Shucks" jeans-clad charm. He proved how the Mac was still the champion in graphic production applications. (What a surprise! Adobe Photoshop, originally designed for the Mac OS, runs significantly faster on a Power PC G3 than it does on a Compaq Presario with Pentium II at 450 Mhz!) Then, he threw us a slider. He proved how the Mac was now champion in real-time, 3D graphics by putting the new G3 in a race with a Voodoo2-enhanced Pentium II at 450 Mhz. (Another surprise! DARK VENGEANCE, a first-person shooter from longtime Macintosh developer, Reality Bytes, runs faster on the new G3 Macintosh!)

Still, the hometown fans of MacWorld loved it. Clearly, Wintel

should shake in their boots after such a demonstration. Then, Jobs began to recount the virtues of the new G3: the expandability up to 1 GB of RAM and hard disk storage up to 100GB; I/O ports for Ethernet, USB, and FireWire; the door that opens to let users have full access to the guts of the machine; the four expansion slots



**When John Carmack says that Apple has finally gotten its act together, even the AntiMac has to listen.**

(three 64-bit 33Mhz and one 32-bit 66Mhz PCI slots) and the new, sleek design. By the time he finished with three stirring video-clips, even yours truly—the AntiMac—felt ready to walk down the aisle to repent as though I were at a Pentecostal tent meeting.

Speaking of tent meetings, guess who they had get up to "testify?" None other than id Software's own John Carmack! When John Carmack says that he's speaking because Apple has finally gotten its act together with 3D graphics, any gamer is going to have to pay attention. According to Carmack, he uses the Macintosh in DeathMatch play sessions at id and competes favorably with people on PCs. He also says that Apple's embrace with Silicon Graphics, Inc. (Apple is adding OpenGL to the Mac OS)

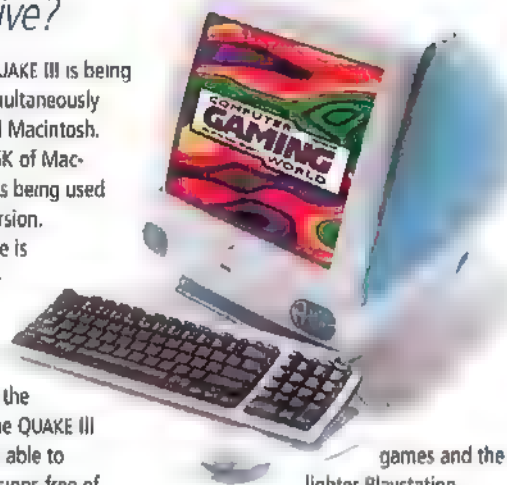
means that QUAKE III is being developed simultaneously on the PC and Macintosh. Only about 15K of Mac-specific code is being used in the Mac version. Everything else is platform independent. Better yet, Carmack promises that the licensees of the QUAKE III engine will be able to build Mac versions free of additional charges.

Of course, Apple has been known to destroy their potential in the game market before. There is a corporate hubris that goes back a long way with plenty of aphorisms

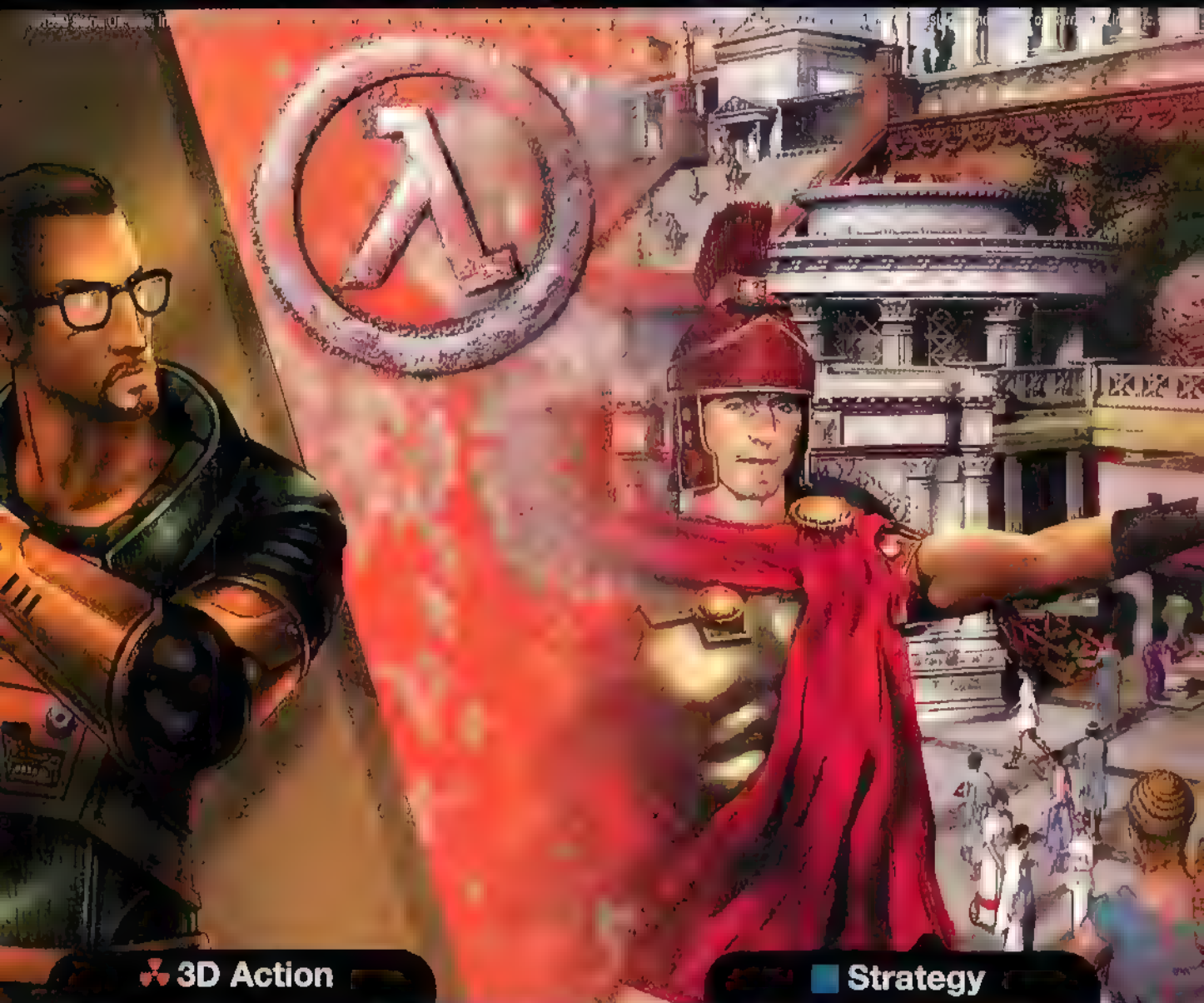
to dredge up regularly to support the idea that games are frivolous and peripheral. Yet, they definitely seem to be moving the right direction right now by listening to developers about OpenGL and pinpointing the hottest titles for Macintosh versions expected to be superior to the PC games. The first round of announcements includes AGE OF EMPIRES, BATTLEZONE, FLY!, HERETIC II, IMPERIALISM II, MYTH II, QUAKE III, QUEST FOR GLORY V, RAINBOW SIX, SIMCITY 3000, STARCRRAFT, and TOMB RAIDER III. Plus, there is a larger number of announcements to be made in the wings (FALCON 4.0 will be one of those.) Also, some Macintosh owners will be excited about the new software-based emulator for Sony Playstation games by a company called Connectix. Casual gamers should really enjoy the flexibility of being able to play the "big" PC


title mix, but that's addressable simply by purchasing a Playstation. Further, most gamers are not going to be happy with what Carmack calls the "silly one-button mouse," or the inability to expand the iMac beyond its aging 3D card, near-Chiclet keyboard, and tinny built-in speakers. Finally, Apple will be challenged to get out some unique Macintosh games. Without something unique to the Mac, I can't see even early adopters making the switch.

In spite of Steve Job's impressive medicine show, I'm not going to buy the impressive new Macintosh as my next gaming panacea. But unlike my stance on previous Macintoshes, I'm not going to tell my friends to avoid them like London during the plague, either. Finally, the Mac looks like a viable platform again. It's about time. **CGW**







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# Happy Landings

Yes, Virginia, You Can Land Successfully in FALCON 4.0

**W**hen you've flown flight sims for a while, you start to get complacent. Except for a few times when I've been distracted by a phone call or surprise spousal shoulder rub, it's literally been years since I crashed an undamaged plane on landing. So imagine my dismay when I broke the landing gear off my F-16 on seven of my first eight landing attempts in FALCON 4.0.

Luckily, I had a chance to talk to MicroProse's Gilman Louie before I trashed my squadron's entire allotment of F-16s. He shared the landing technique he learned from F-16 pilot Pete Bonnani. After a few touch-and-gos practicing this technique, my only crashes have come when flying heavily damaged aircraft. So here's the official Gilman/Bonnani Landing Course, with a few tweaks by yours truly.

## Use the Flight Path Marker, Luke

To practice landings, choose Mission 9 in the Tactical Engagement section. You'll enter the sim on an extended final approach. Contact the tower by pressing T and request an emergency landing, in order to get

clearance for a straight-in approach.

As you near the runway, extend your airbrakes and drop your speed to about 180 knots. Don't retract your airbrakes when reach your target speed, however. Leaving them open will give you better response to throttle movements at slow speed. Once you reach 180



**I broke the gear off my F-16 on seven of my first eight landing attempts.**

knots, drop your landing gear.

Also, rather than just pressing B to open the brakes all the way, hold down Shift-B for a count of four to open them to about 60 percent of full extension. (The left cockpit view has a brake percentage indicator.) This will help keep you from scraping the brakes on the ground if you pull the nose up

too high. Real F-16s now limit the brake extension to 43 percent when the gear is down.

The key to successful landings in FALCON 4.0 is learning to use the flight path marker on the HUD (heads-up display). If you're not familiar with how the marker works, read the description on pages 1-5 of the FALCON 4.0 manual, and fly training mission 1.

Place the flight path marker on the black overrun area at the close end of the runway. Use the throttle to keep the marker on the overrun area and your speed around 180 knots. The marker should be about two to three degrees below the HUD's horizon line—more than that and you're too high on final approach.

degree HUD marker lined up with the gun cross. If you've done everything right, you should hear the gentle squeak of the tires hitting the runway, rather than the all-too-familiar screech of your fuselage scraping the ground.

Once you've touched down, don't drop the nose. Instead, keep the 10-degree angle until the nose falls on its own. This bleeds quite a bit of speed through aerobraking. Once the nose falls, use the wheel brake key (K) to slow to a stop.

You may want to activate the ACMI flight recorder while practicing. You'll be able to see your mistakes, relive your successes, and catch some impressive special effects visible in the external view that it would be suicidal to watch

## Landing with Flare

Now watch the altitude tape on the right side of the HUD. When it reaches 100 feet—no sooner—start to pull the nose up and "walk" the flight path marker to the far end of the runway. You can start pulling the throttle back now.

Watch your nose angle—the optimal angle will have the 10

while on final approach.

Think you're good now? Try Mission 11, Flameout Landings. Succeed there and *then* you'll have bragging rights. **GGW**

*Denny Atkins is seriously peeved that FALCON 4.0 shipped chock full o' bugs, yet he's having a blast flying the stable training missions.*

**I**'m thinking of writing a self-help book for game industry execs entitled I'm Okay, You Need a Patch. If you're designing games and your products exhibit any of the signs below, you're a candidate.

1) Holiday releases. When buyers have to decide between four WW2 sims, FALCON 4.0, HALF-LIFE, MYTH 2, BROOD WAR, and a half-dozen other great releases, are sales really going to be much higher than a mid-year release? Kudos to EA and Firaxis for not rushing ALPHA CENTAURI, finished in late December, onto those crowded shelves. C'mon, folks, give us something to buy in April.

2) Developers supporting only the joystick at Controller ID 1. Hey kids, Windows has supported multiple controllers for a couple of years now. USB gives us the physical capability

to attach multiple controllers, so you can, for instance, put flight controls on your joystick port and a couple of gamepads on your USB ports. Yet I've seen only one game (FALCON 4.0) so far that lets you choose between controllers.

3) Sierra Utilities. Designed to simplify patching for less technical users, this utility has numerous glitches, the worst of which is the ability to wipe out your games directory if you uninstall the unpatched HALF-LIFE after choosing not to place it into a "Sierra" subdirectory. Most annoying is Sierra's brash placement of the icon on the root of the Start menu. Hey Sierra, you're not special, and my Start menu isn't yours to play with. Put the Sierra Utilities under the Programs sub-menu like everyone else. After you fix them.

## DENNY'S RANTS



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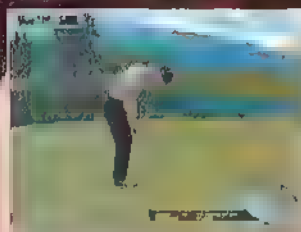
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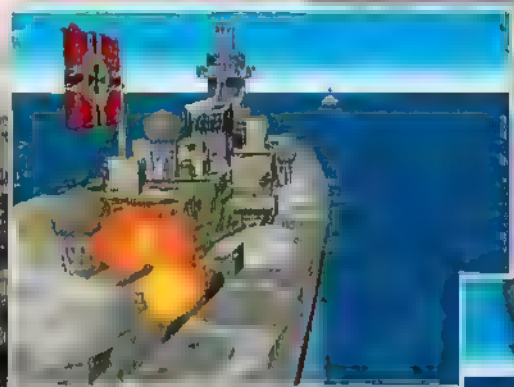


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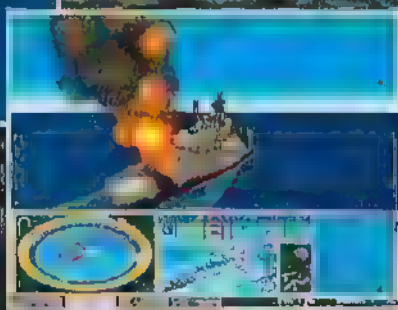
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# Emmapeeler

*Channeling the Avengers, Batman, and Doctor Who to Jump-start Adventure Gaming*

**T**his past weekend, I was having the time of my life (death?) playing Manny in the afterlife of GRIM FANDANGO. And it occurred to me that if today's technology—and a designer like Tim Schaefer—can make an enjoyable game from Mexican Day of the Dead folklore, it's high time that adventure games branch out from fairies, overly-hardboiled detectives, and improbably endowed women being bent over backwards by male cigarette ads. Here, then, are my picks for games to be brought over from other media.

## 1. The Dark Knight Returns

The definitive noir Batman story, as far away from the camp TV show as can be imagined, and definitely *not* for kids. A middle-aged Batman hasn't donned his cape in decades, Commissioner Gordon is retiring, street gangs rule the streets of Gotham City, and the homicidal Joker is proclaimed a victim of society. Finally, Batman snaps, rips his costume out of mothballs, and declares war on his criminal enemies in a manner to give even Quentin Tarantino pause. If you darkened GRIM FANDANGO's palate just a bit and added a variety of ultraviolent arcade elements, this game could easily make fans forget the recent Batmovie abominations. Frank Miller, whose screenwriting credits include *Robocop 2*, would surely be up to the task of adapting his own graphic novel to the PC screen.

## 2. Doctor Who

What man could resist being a renegade Timelord, zipping about

through time and space, righting wrongs with a variety of beautiful female companions at one's side? This sci-fi game would give an open-minded design team almost total freedom to come up with bizarre villains, although the infamously destructive Daleks and the egomaniacal Cybermen (to whom *Star Trek's* Borg owe a huge debt)



**Trust me: Lara Croft will be working for a temp agency after a polygonal Emma Peel hits.**

would certainly have to make an appearance. (Note to marketing folks: Given how talky the cult series was, you wouldn't need to plunk down millions for the rights to the latest 3D engine, either.) Larger than life and not to be taken totally seriously—a pretty good starting point for any game—whosoever might have the guts and the capital to do this one right can expect serious Eurocurrency (and even a few U.S. dollars) to come their way. They just need to get on the move while the definitive Doctor, Tom Baker, is still around to do the lead voiceover.

## 3. The Avengers

If, like me, you suffered through the 1998 *Avengers*

movie—m.s.c.a.t., sexless and boring—you'll thrill to the chance to play a game based on the droll, witty, and veddy British original TV series. Sure, nostalgia can be a trap, but if you were careful to set this in 1967—and to put superspy Emma Peel in that fabulous orange jumpsuit—you could have a stylish game that evokes the spirit of the original.

After all, Patrick MacNee can still play the consummate English gentleman who rarely musses his Saville Row suits whilst dispatching the foe of the week. Diana Rigg could also probably be persuaded to take



developing a title with a strong female lead?

## 4. Sandman Mystery Theatre

Wesley Dodds is a wild mix of Sherlock Holmes, Lord Peter Whimsy, and the 1930s version of Batman—except that the Sandman, Dodds' alter-ego, doesn't walk around with his buttocks tensed all the time. He just wears a WWI gas mask and douses his enemies with noxious fumes. All of Wesley's money doesn't help him sleep any better—hence his nocturnal superhero hobby—his perky debutante girlfriend, Dian Belmont, suspects his secret identity, and the official police force considers him an annoying amateur and borderline criminal. It's a wonderful mix,

time from her stints on Broadway and PBS to once again lend her velvet pipes to the voice of Emma Peel, that multi-talented scientist, martial artist, detective and incomparably enticing married woman. Trust me: Lara Croft will be working for a temp agency after a polygonal Emma Peel hits. With the number of fighting sequences typical of the TV show, we'd need a good action/adventure engine, like KING'S QUEST: MASK OF ETERNITY. Maybe Roberta Williams or Jane Jensen would be interested in

since an adventure game is all about overcoming obstacles.



Maybe Guy Davis, who did the marvelous period art for the comic series, would lend his pen? If not, we'll just steal the art team who did the dream sequence for GABRIEL KNIGHT: SINS OF THE FATHERS.

It's far more likely that we'll be subjected to platform scrollers based on *Independence War XIV* than any of the above, but I can dream.... **CGW**

Lately, TC has been acting out his swashbuckling fantasies in Bethesda's excellent REDGUARD.





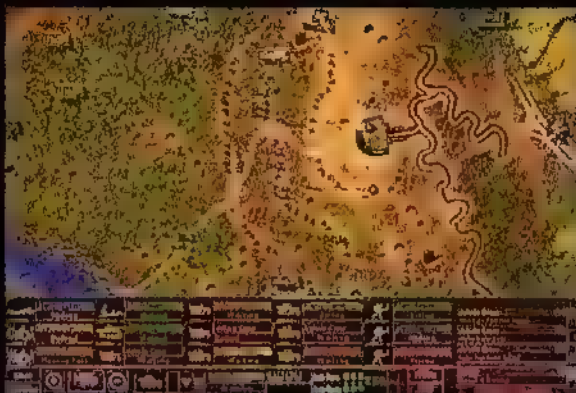
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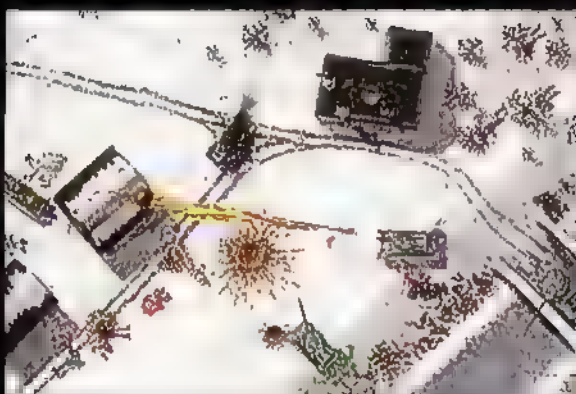
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## FUNNY OLD FART

Jeff Green's column (Greenspeak) in the February issue is the

funniest thing I have ever read in CGW. It is about the

funniest thing I've seen in a long time. I was in

tears laughing. Your picture really set the

article off. It's nice when someone can be

funny by talking about themselves instead of

putting someone else down. I guess I can really

relate, because I just celebrated my 33rd last week

and I have the same troubles with these games. Tell the editors to double your

salary because you deserve it.



Gerald L. Pease

Via the Internet

## ALIENS VS PREDATOR

I took one look at the cover of the March issue and quickly opened the magazine. All I can say is, it's about time! I've been waiting for ALIENS VS. PREDATOR II since late 1995! I've been looking forward to new levels and weapons and...what?? AvP II? You don't remember AvP I? NoNoNo, not that sorry arcade fighting game! AVPII The WOLFENSTEIN clone! Oh, I guess you didn't own an Atari Jaguar. Well, the rest of you are going to find out what the 100,000 or so of us discovered almost four years ago: REBELLION ROCKS! NO other game came close for tense, heart-stopping excitement. Not DOOM. Not HEXEN. Not QUAKE. Not even... well, RESIDENT EVIL comes close. I would literally climb up the back of my sofa! And it was a WOLFENSTEIN clone in the DOOM era! I still keep the Jaguar handy!

Tony T

Via the Internet

P.S. I hope it still has ventilation ducts.

You're weird, dude! But we like you anyway, so we're going to give you the world's first opportunity to play AvP from the Aliens' perspective next month. Check it out on the May issue, on sale April 6.

## P II 450 AND ASUS P2B-LS

I depend on CGW to help me make my decisions when it's time to upgrade my gaming machine, and I pay attention to the "Killer Rigs" list for hardware choices. Much to my surprise however is your choice of the PII 450mhz CPU and the ASUS P2B-LS motherboard. According to the specs on the ASUS motherboard it only supports up to 400MHZ CPUs! Why pair it with a 450MHZ CPU?

And while I'm at it, where do you get the incredible prices? Are these only corporate discount prices? The best price I could find for the ASUS motherboard was \$380. How about including the source of the components as well as the item in your "Killer Rig" list?

Chuck Stratton

Via the Internet

Loyd Case responds: In fact, the P2B-LS does support 450MHz. If you look at the ASUS Web site ([www.asus.com.tw/Products/Motherboard/Pentiumpro/P2b-ls/index.html](http://www.asus.com.tw/Products/Motherboard/Pentiumpro/P2b-ls/index.html)), you'll notice the individual jumper settings for clock multiplier and bus clock. The P2B-LS supports clock multipliers in excess of 6x so the 4.5x is no problem. You can buy systems that vendors with the P2B-LS and the 450MHz Pentium II, in fact. I'm looking forward to dropping a 500MHz Kalmia in the system, though that may require a BIOS update.



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## REVIEW PATCH: LORDS OF MAGIC SE

I am the General Manager of Impressions Software, developer of the LORDS OF MAGIC: SPECIAL EDITION. I was deeply disturbed by your review of the LORDS OF MAGIC SPECIAL EDITION entitled "Abra-Ca-Blah-Blah" on page 240 of the February issue. Not only does this review fail to provide any in-depth information about the scope of this product, but it implies that it is ultimately nothing more than an attempt to get our fans to "pay extra" for something we should have given them in the first place.

The SPECIAL EDITION was created to reward our fans. Its large scope, relative to standard expansion products, was to demonstrate that we care very deeply about delivering a quality gaming experience for the money. The Quest Pack contains five hand-crafted quests, each with its own story and characters, engaged in various interlocking adventures and subquests. To script each of the 200 or so encounters contained within, we had to develop our own quest editor. We estimate that these five quests provide somewhere between 50 and 100 hours of additional gameplay, of a sort not provided by the original product, nor part of its original concept. Despite this, your review mentions them only once as, "a few extra scenarios" (LOM isn't even a scenario-based game) and further questions our right to expect users to pay for them. This characterization is just inexcusable.

The inaccuracy of this review leads me to believe that you either were not very familiar with the original game, or you did not take the time to play the SPECIAL EDITION thoroughly, nor

read any of our documentation regarding it, or perhaps all of the above. I think it's your turn to issue a "massive patch" for this review.

Chris Beatrice  
General Manager,  
Impressions Software

**Tim Carter Responds:** Mr. Beatrice is correct that my review of LORDS OF MAGIC SPECIAL EDITION did not give much attention to the additional quests included with LOM-SE. To the extent that this misrepresented the fundamental nature of LOM-SE, I apologize.

I must correct him on one point, however, as I am familiar with the original version of LOM, having reviewed it for CGW. In any review, especially a short one, the reviewer must choose where to focus his or her analysis. In the case of LORDS OF MAGIC SPECIAL EDITION, I felt that the core game system was the appropriate place to focus my attention, in part because I did not feel that the game was strong enough to warrant paying for hours of additional gameplay. What good is an extra 50 to 100 hours of quests when most gamers won't play long enough to get through the initial game? Of what value is an expansion pack to a product so riddled with programming bugs and key design flaws that it was mostly unplayable?

Thus, I stand by my original review: LOM-SE fixed many flaws in the original LOM. Sure, it added quests, I just don't think they're worth paying for on their own.

**Johnny Wilson comments:** I apologize to our readers for a review that failed to meet our standards. CGW expects its reviewers to finish the game, but Tim Carter did not finish the quests in LOM SE, and could not adequately comment on the additional hours of gameplay. I regret the omission, and I have taken steps to reduce the chances of such an oversight in the future.

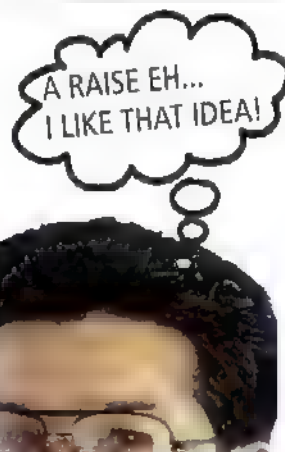
As for the rating, the additional hours of gameplay were taken into account. So, while lamenting the sloppiness of the reviewer's methodology, we stand by the three-star rating. Even with all of the enhancements and new quests, we perceive LOM: SPECIAL EDITION as a mediocre game.

## YOU DON'T KNOW JACK

I must say that your CG-ROM Editor, Jack Rodrigues, continues to do the most outstanding work I've seen from any computer game magazine. He is the only editor I've ever read that is able to bring out pure rapture and jubilation in his writing. Give that man a promotion and a raise! (But don't stop him from writing.)

Robert Wilcox  
Italy  
Via the Internet

We don't often hear terms like "rapture" and "jubilation" in describing Jack, but that's okay. Good thing you live in Italy, though.





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FOX

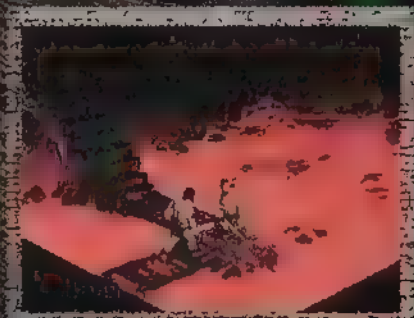
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- Conquer malicious beasts through a dangerous land
- Cast spells, unravel secrets with extraordinary power



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# Pick Up Where Civ Let Off



## April CD Titles

### Get the CG-ROM

CGW has a new, lower price CD-ROM subscription! It's only \$29.97 a year for 12 issues with 12 CDs. To subscribe to the CD-ROM version of the magazine, call (303) 665-8930 or send in one of those annoying cards that fall on the floor. If you already subscribe, you have to wait until your current sub expires before receiving the CD version. We're not sure why, except to say that it appears technology hasn't quite permeated mailing houses yet. If you have an address change or complaint about your sub, email [cgw@neodata.com](mailto:cgw@neodata.com). Good luck, good reading, and play on.



PRODUCT/GENRE	EXECUTABLE	DESCRIPTION
<b>ALPHA CENTAURI</b>		
Strategy game	<code>\Alpha\smacdemo.exe</code>	The spiritual sequel to Civ II, where you take over a colony in space for 100 turns.
<b>BASEBALL 2000</b>		
Sports game	<code>\bb2000\isebe2kdb.exe</code>	Play a bit of Homerun Derby to get a feel for the game.
<b>SIMCITY 3000</b>		
City-management strategy game	<code>\Sim3K\SC3000\Setup\English\setup</code>	Sample a year in Maxis' newest city simulation.
<b>SLAVE ZERO</b>		
Third-person action	<code>\SlaveZero\Setup\setup.exe</code>	Exclusive demo lets you play the first mission from the game featured in last issue's cover story.
<b>TEN</b>		
	<code>\ten\setup.exe</code>	Front-end for TEN, where you can play a variety of multiplayer games.
<b>TEST DRIVE 5</b>		
Arcade racing	<code>\TestDrive5\TD5 CGW DEMO.exe</code>	Race through a track in either a '69 or a '99 Corvette.
<b>THE AXE</b>		
Music-making software	<code>\Demos\Axe\install.exe</code>	With three instruments, make your own little tunes and ditties.
<b>THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT</b>		
First-person burglar simulator	<code>\Thief\ThiefD.exe</code>	Rob a governor in this abbreviated version of the first mission.
<b>UNTOUCHABLES</b>		
Fighting game	<code>\untouchable\untouch.avi</code>	AVI preview of a fighting game.
<b>WARBIRDS 2.5</b>		
Flight sim	<code>\Warbirds25\setup</code>	Front end for I-Magic's well-known online sim.



# THEY SAY YOU CAN'T REWRITE HISTORY...

3400 BC: SUMERIANS USE WHEELED VEHICLES.

0 AD

271 AD: CHINESE CREATE FIRST COMPASS.

1313 AD: GERMANS INVENT GUNPOWDER.

1759 AD: VIKINGS DEVELOP A  
FLEET OF SUPERSONIC JETS ARMED  
WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

~~1903 AD: WRIGHT BROTHERS FIRST FLIGHT.~~

## THEY NEVER USED OUR GUIDE



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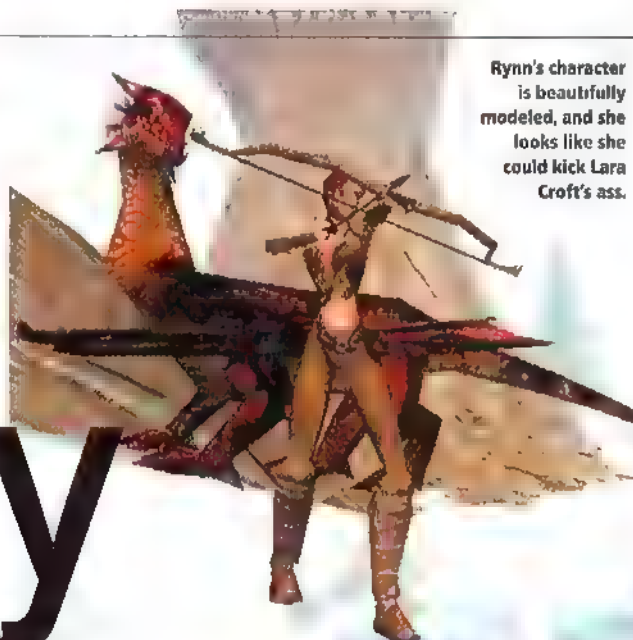
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## *DRAKAN's Combination of Beautiful Warrior and Powerful Dragon Cast an Irresistible Spell*

**E**ver since seeing DRAKAN at a Psygnosis press party late last year, I couldn't wait to see what it's like to go flying with Rynn by dragon-back. My wish came true just before press time when I received a playable beta of the game. After playing it for a few days, I'm very impressed.

The game takes place in a series of beautiful and stunningly realistic outdoor environments. Each level is extremely large and spectacularly detailed, featuring mountain ranges; canyons; rivers and waterfalls; small villages; and extensive cavern systems. The game strives for total immersion and even the weather is very



Rynn's character is beautifully modeled, and she looks like she could kick Lara Croft's ass.

# Beauty & the Beast

Aerial dogfighting gets up-close and personal in the narrow confines of the grotto.



Using a third-person perspective, the game combines hand-to-hand fighting using all sorts of weapons and spells with intense aerial dragon dogfights. You take on the role of Rynn, a beautiful warrior girl, on a quest to rescue her kidnapped brother from the evil Wartoks. Her companion, a fire-breathing dragon named Arok, can talk, fly, and blast foes with four different kinds of lethal fire and gas.

realistically modeled with excellent looking rain, wind, and snowfall effects. The lighting changes based on the time of day, and the water effects are quite impressive. The developers have taken great care in trying to breathe life into this magical world.

You might think DRAKAN bears strong similarities with TOMB RAIDER III, but gameplay is more along the lines of HERETIC II. Both HERETIC II and DRAKAN focus on fighting, whereas TR III is more puzzle-oriented. Most of the game involves intense combat with the kilted Wartoks and other fiendish creatures, however exploration is richly rewarded both in terms of finding treasure and the thrill of stumbling across cool hidden

areas. There is an easy-to-use inventory system and plenty of useful items to collect. The transition from controlling Rynn on the ground to Arok in the air is seamless.

The game's list of impressive technological features includes colored lighting, high-res textures, and realistic skeletal character animation. The creatures' artificial intelligence looks promising. A Wartok might charge Rynn if she is on the ground but then run for cover if under fire. Wartoks investigate strange sounds and call for help if they see the player.

According to Psygnosis, the game is about 80 percent complete and should be released sometime by May, 1999.

KENNETH JOHNSON





# UNREAL

## Developments



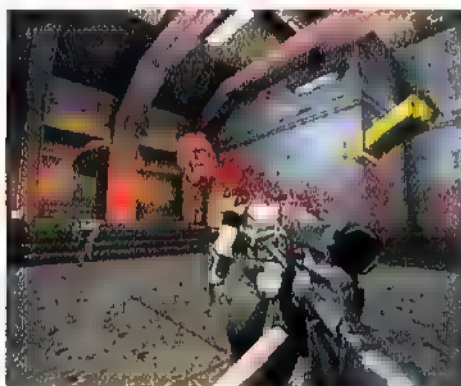
### GT Interactive Polishing Two Games Using the UNREAL Engine

Delivering what may well have been the snazziest graphics of the past year, the engine powering UNREAL was one of 1998's real technical standouts. Now GT Interactive is preparing to release two new, very dissimilar games using this engine.

#### UNREAL TOURNAMENT

While UNREAL's developer, EpicMegaGames, has been addressing that game's multiplayer shortcomings via patches, they are really embracing the multiplayer experience with UNREAL TOURNAMENT (UT), currently slated for an April release. While the game will sport blistering online action, UT will encourage gamers to hone their skills in the game's single player ladder tournaments. Gamers will battle increasingly deadly bots in four separate games, each with 8 to 10 levels. Gamers who rise to the top of each ladder will earn the title of UNREAL Grandmaster and be able to use a previously locked robot mesh as their online avatar.

UT features several new weapons including a nuke, the impact hammer melee weapon, and (our favorite) the Redeemer—a missile launcher that lets you steer the warhead through doors and hallways to obliterate your target. New gear includes a Translocator, sort of a handheld



teleportation device that lets you easily reach high platforms as well as telefrag your enemies.

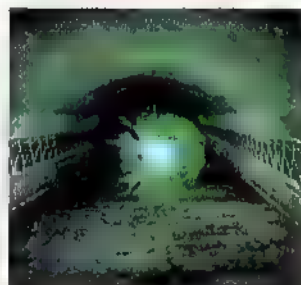
While UT will support the standard deathmatch and capture-the-flag options, it's the Domination and Assault games that are most exciting. Domination tasks teams with controlling specific points on a map, accruing points the longer they hold them; the first team to reach a preset number of points wins. In Assault, teams must complete timed mission to destroy or defend targets to progress. Obviously, all of this will be available for play against other humans, not just bots.

#### THE WHEEL OF TIME

Based on Robert Jordan's popular fantasy series, THE WHEEL OF TIME (WOT) is an unusual first-person shooter/strategy hybrid, which is set about 100 years before the first *Wheel of Time* story. There are no conventional weapons—gamers must use angreal, which lets them cast up to 30 spells, including fireballs, enemy-seeking balls of energy, shields, and a shift plane that teleports you about five feet, perfect for avoiding seeking spells cast by opponents. Angreal are collected as gamers work to retrieve

mystic seals held by their enemies.

What should elevate WOT above the shooter mob is its unusual strategic game. Seals will be housed in citadels, each held by a player. You'll have to outfit your citadel with pits, spear traps, thick walls, portcullises, and vicious monsters to protect your seals while your away stealing seals yourself. Additionally, higher level sentries can be purchased and given orders to guard specific areas or to round up monsters from all over when intruders appear. WOT's multiplayer game, supporting up to four players customize fortresses according to preset spending limits, should be extremely interesting. WOT is currently set to hit shelves in May.



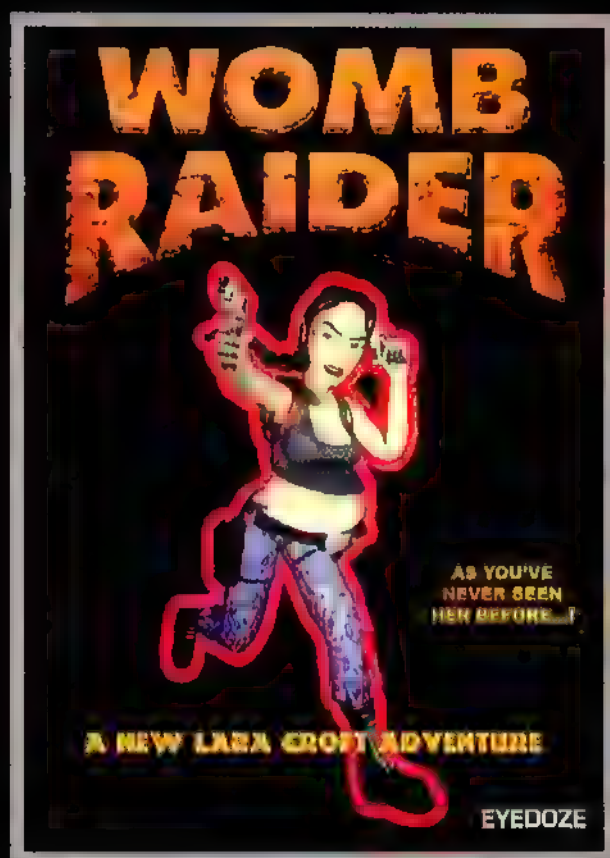
Spells in the game really show off WHEEL OF TIME's great lighting effects. In one, a green Seeker spell hunts its target down a long tunnel while a blast of lightning takes out some trolls in the other.

### MiG Alley Takes Off



After the disappointment of Virgin/Eagle Interactive's medloca, FLYING CORPS flight sim fans anxious for a Korean War game will be pleased to know that Empire's MIG-ALLEY is finally set for takeoff in the first half of this year. From the makers of FLYING CORPS, this sim promises a dynamic campaign, dogfights over the Yalu River featuring over 50 plane and ground troops who will react to your strafing runs and flyable aircraft. Look for a full-blown hands-on preview next month's CGW.

# Skilled. Dangerous. Pregnant.



Lara's back... and she's pregnant! Now she must find out who is responsible.

Sure, Lara Croft has a hot body, but with all this adventuring she hasn't had time for extra-curricular activities. So imagine her surprise when she starts waking up with nausea, fatigue, and a strange craving for lobster ice cream. Now Lara must track down and identify the mysterious Womb Raider. She'll kill whoever did this to her — or at least make sure that they pay child support.

Three levels of difficulty (Trimesters 1-3) • Motivate the Swollen Ankle Walk for an added challenge • Powerful new weapons, including the Used Dagger and the Childbirth Pain Gun (Target feels like they're passing a watermelon)

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## WOMB RAIDER

This parody is the brainchild of Chris Condon, a Systems Engineer at a network integration company. Condon has more than 30 parodies on his site, [www.dumbentia.com](http://www.dumbentia.com), including spoofs of Microsoft, Apple, Linux, Kenneth Starr, and Monica Lewinsky. For a good laugh, check it out, and be sure to see his "seven deadly motivational posters," offering positive reinforcement for those with slothful, wrathful, gluttonous, greedy, and lustful dispositions.

If you play *QUAKE II* online, you may also encounter Condon's remains in his guise as "Fuzzyman."



# Prepare for a rare. Russian RUSH!

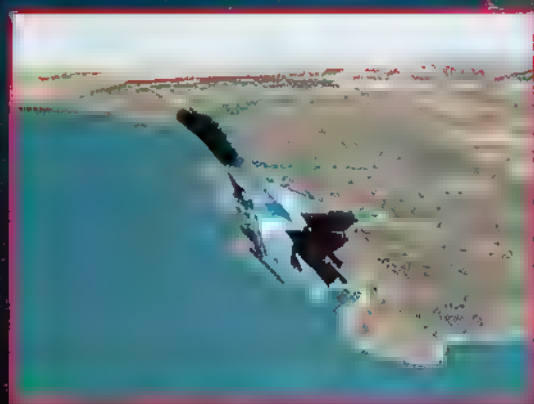
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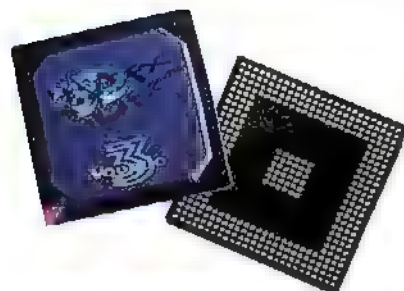
TM





# First Test!

# Voodoo3



## New 3Dfx Chips Are Faster Than The Current Leaders

**3**Dfx is preparing to raise the bar again. The 3D performance champion, following its acquisition of board-maker STB, is preparing to unleash Voodoo3 in four different offerings. We put the Voodoo3 3000 and 3500 versions to the test, and the results were mighty impressive. Voodoo3 outperformed both nVidia's RIVA TNT and ATI's Rage 128, the two current performance leaders.

Voodoo3 will come in four flavors, broken down by speed grade. For motherboard-down configurations, there'll be a 125MHz

## TEST RESULTS

3D WinBench 99  
(1024x768x16)

ATI Rage 128 559  
STB Velocity 4400 473  
Voodoo3 (166MHz) 726

3D GameGauge  
(800x600)

408.6  
140.5  
178.3

FORSAKEN INCOMING TUROK QUAKE II QUAKE 1 F22ADF

Tested on a Pentium-II 400MHz system with 128MB of memory, the 440BX chipset, and EIDE storage components.

version, followed by two "mainstream" parts, the Voodoo3 2000 and 3000, whose speed grades will be 143 and 166MHz, respectively. Finally, the flagship part will be the Voodoo3 3500, which will be clocked at 183MHz. On the 3500, 3Dfx may include additional control panels to allow tweekers to try and squeeze every last bit of

performance out of the chip.

We tested the Voodoo3 3000 (166MHz) against the two current champions, RIVA TNT and Rage 128, and the Voodoo3 beat both of them. Image quality looked very solid as well. And since Voodoo3's drivers were beta, its performance may see further improvement before cards start shipping

For those gamers pining for a 3D-only Voodoo3 card, there may be good news in the offing. According to one source at 3Dfx, a 3D-only board using Voodoo3's 3D core may be a future product. Stay tuned to CGW's 3D IronWorks (in the Hardware section) for more details on Voodoo3 products.

DAVE SALVATOR

## NEWS FLASH

### Origin Quashes ULTIMA ONLINE Suit

The lawsuit against EA and Origin over ULTIMA ONLINE has been withdrawn. The six gamers known as Ken Hinthner et al. (represented by attorney George Schultz) dropped their case against EA in early January. As part of the settlement, EA agreed to donate \$15,000 to the San Jose Tech Museum, but both parties have to pay for their own legal fees.

The legal dispute began in March, 1998, when Schultz filed suit against EA and Origin for breach of contract, negligence, misrepresentation, and breach of warranty. He charged that EA and Origin should pay damages to UO users for releasing a game plagued by alleged technical problems,

such as lag and server crashes, and deceptive packaging, such as a failure to mention monthly fees and adequate system requirements.

Schultz told *GameSpot* news that he thought the gaming industry was better off as a result of his case. "I never saw the subject of bugs in games treated more seriously," he said. "Maybe next time it won't take a lawsuit to hear what [gamers] have to say about a game."

Origin released a statement saying, "We take extreme exception to Mr. Schultz's judgment that his actions have made the gaming industry better. He failed to certify this as a class action in part because his plaintiffs were not representative of the more than 100,000 playing ULTIMA ONLINE players."

### New Festival For Indie Developers

The Gathering of Developers and Miller Freeman are teaming up to host what they hope will be this industry's version of the Sundance Film Festival. The two will co-present the first annual GDC Independent Games Festival at Miller Freeman's Game Developers Conference March 16-18 in San Jose, CA. The festival will recognize console, PC, Mac and online games equally, according to organizers. A \$10,000 Grand Prize for the best independent game of the year will go to the winner. Awards will also be presented for Technical Excellence, Art, Audio, Game Design and Audience Choice.

Miller Freeman says the Independent Games Festival is designed to promote interactive

entertainment as an artform and provide a forum for independent developers to show their work.

### Microsoft Buys FASA

Microsoft acquired FASA Interactive Technologies from its parent company, Virtual World Entertainment Group, in early January. This gives Microsoft the "exclusive and perpetual electronic rights" to FASA's popular BattleTech property. Neither company released financial terms of the deal.

FASA Interactive is currently developing MECHWARRIOR 3 for MicroProse and Hasbro Interactive. Microsoft Games manager Ed Fries indicated that FASA would finish the title for the two companies. However, future BattleTech titles will be published by Microsoft, such as MECHWARRIOR 4 (said to be in development now).

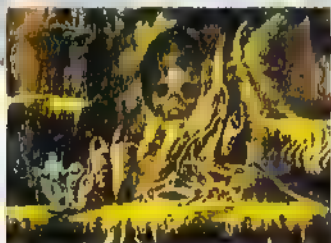
# This Odd's for You.



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"...combines stunning graphics and engrossing gameplay."  
(★★★★ out of four)

- USA TODAY

"An awesome successor to an outstanding original."

- GAMES ADDICT

"Top Ten, Hot 100 Games for the Holidays."

- COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

"...brilliant scripting and...hilarious... gameplay distinguish this title as something special."

- FORBES ONLINE

"Witty, fun and full of action... a great game to usher in the new year."

- LA TIMES



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# NEWS FLESH

...restructuring mostly to pay employee  
...and liability issues. About \$100,000  
...at charge or reflect pension items, the  
...said.  
...chief executive and chief secu-  
...report quarter included \$69 mil-  
...with the accounting of  
...met is in November 1997.  
...Mr. Kivgus at Intel Corporation  
...exploring ways to reduce its sta-

## Eye on Ion

Ion Storm's DAIKATANA has been delayed until at least January, 2000, while developers address the program AI's lack of Y2K compliance.... In other Ion news, the company proudly



announced it had completed a massive bundling deal for over 800,000 copies of DOMINION "We're excited to be able to bundle DOMINION in every box of Cocoa Frosted Flakes," said

Kellogg's CEO Antonio Tiger. "We foresee a marked increase in sales once mothers realize what a great job DOMINION CDs do of keeping cereal bowls from leaving rings on the table." Ion's John Romero said, "The people now here at Ion are very positive. Morale has never been higher."

## Fire in the Hole!

We've unearthed more details on SID MEIER'S LATRINE TYCOON, which focuses on the unsung heroes of war: latrine management battalions. The game will feature resource management in the form of shovels, lime, air fresheners, toilet paper, and, in later scenarios, portable chemical toilets. Of course the turn-based game will feature a state-of-the-

art 3D game engine with real-time volumetric colored lighting, volumetric fog, four-channel positional audio, and force feedback support certain to put gamers knee-deep in the latrine action. Sid lifted the lid on a few scenarios for us: One mission has you scrambling to deal with hundreds of infantrymen who've eaten too much overripe fruit while another (our favorite) is a frightening Civil War scenario spotlighting the tragic misapplication of poison oak.

## Sim Pilot Gets Girlfriend

Dedicated flight sim pilot Tom "Baby Doc" Revvord announced recently he has gotten a girlfriend. "It was horrible," said

newsgroup regular Lee Kim. "He didn't show up at the FALCON 3.0 LAN meet, and we needed his rig, so we went to his place. And there he was, in his replica F-16 cockpit, strangely intertwined with...a woman." Revvord's virtual squadron members at the 888th fighter group are still reeling from the shock. "Of course we're worried. For God's sake, man, he's a FLANKER 2.0 beta tester! He has responsibilities!"

## Total Recall

Following up on its laudable recall of FOOTBALL '99, Sierra FXHomeAttractions has recalled all games shipped in 1997. Purchasers will receive a coupon good for a free game, and a complimentary copy of OUTPOST.



## The F-L-U-S-H-O-R Gaming Seat

Looking for the most intense gaming experience, but just not willing to go to the john when nature calls? We understand. The motivation behind the FLUSHOR Gaming Seat was simple. Give the dedicated gamer a way to enjoy games longer, while providing feedback as well. With our new Geyser Slam™ technology, your butt will get an intense splash of ice-cold water whenever you jump into liquid in your 3D games. Cool, huh? We think so, too. Check out our Web site and remember—FLUSHOR is for gamers who really give a crap about their games.

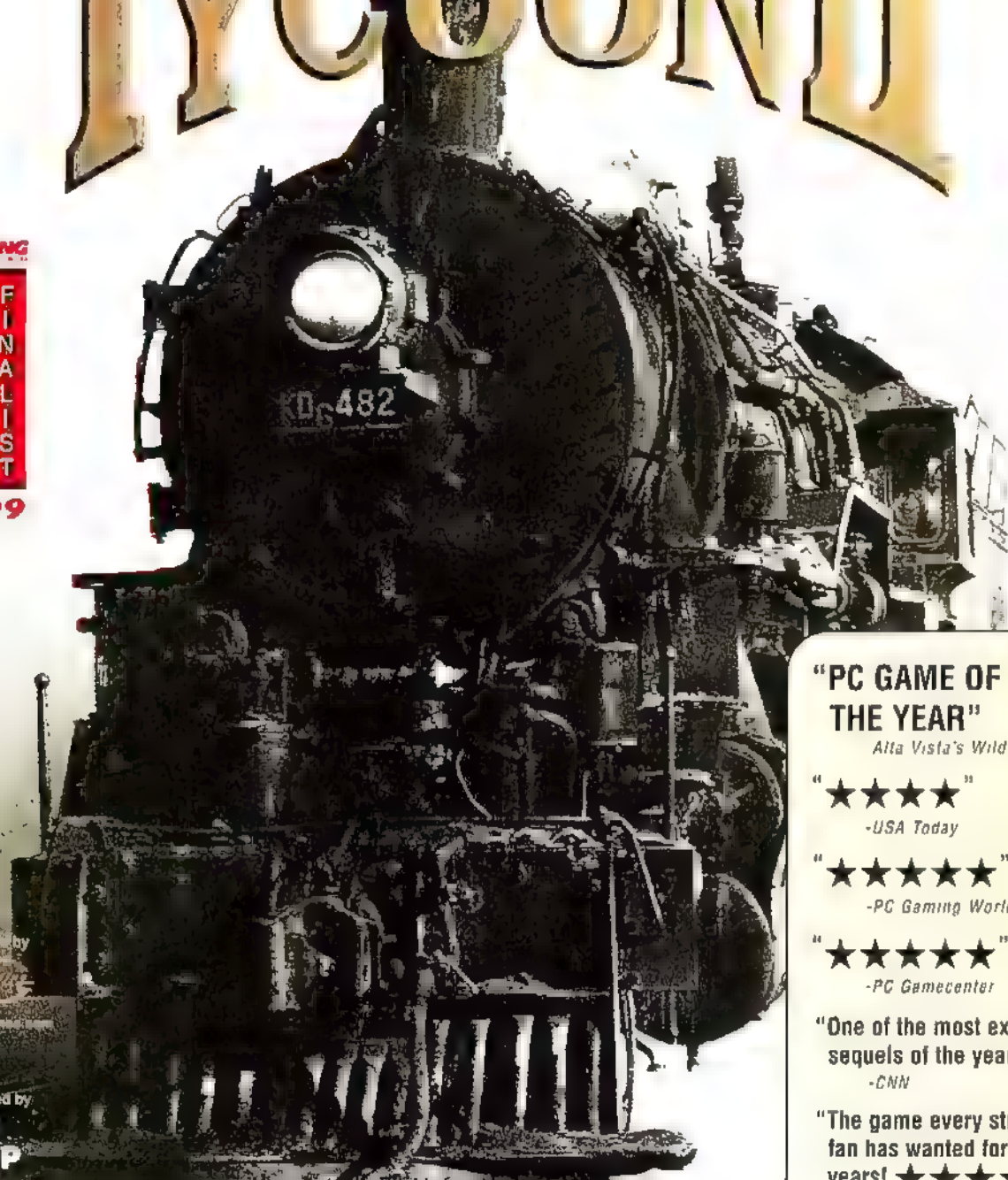


(Seat pictured with optional septic tank.)

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# RAILROAD TYCOON II

COMPUTER  
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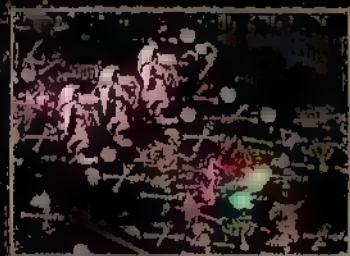
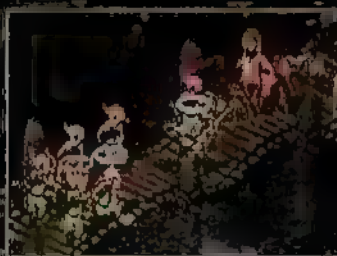
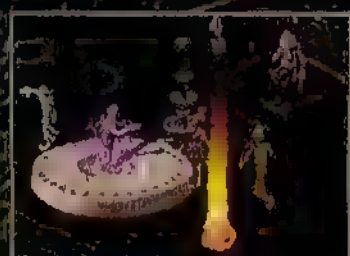
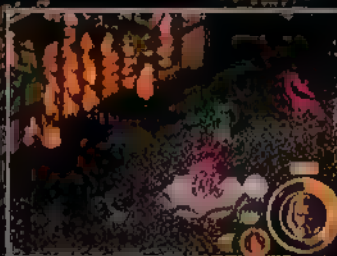
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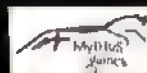


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## Fumble! Sierra Sports Recalls FOOTBALL PRO 99 Money Refunded to Angry Consumers

**T**oday's lesson, class: How *not* to relaunch your flagship football game.

In one of the most embarrassing blunders in recent gaming history, Sierra Sports, following a mountain of complaints and bad publicity, issued a recall in January of FOOTBALL PRO 99, due to an insurmountable number of bugs in the supposedly "finished" game. The game was pulled from store shelves, and Sierra began offering a full refund to those who purchased the game on or before January 20, as well as a coupon for a free Sierra game valued at \$29.99 or less.

For a game that, in a former life, won CGW's Sports Game of the Year award three times in a row (1993-95) and is an inductee in the CGW Hall of Fame, it's been a long, hard fall. FRONT PAGE SPORTS' FOOTBALL, in its prime, was widely acknowledged as the deepest, most realistic football game ever. But the game has been flailing for at least two seasons now, with outdated graphics and a convoluted interface, among other problems. So Sierra mercy-killed the entire FRONT PAGE line, rechristened it Sierra Sports, and promised an all-new, state-of-the-art football game for this year.

After numerous delays, Sierra finally released the game at the close of 1998—and the result was an unmitigated disaster. "What can I say? We dropped the ball," said Sean Gleason, Sierra Sports' marketing director. "We built this product from the ground up over two years, and we let the impending end of the NFL season, and the desire to get it out over the holidays cloud our judgment. We made a mistake."

Gleason said that he estimated that the recall would cost Sierra over \$1 million, and that's in addition to all the previous investments in the game in terms of development and marketing—and that's also in addition to the \$29.95 coupons they'll be doling out to frustrated consumers.

In the meantime, the company is going to try to fix the game for a re-release this summer as FOOTBALL PRO 2000. The plan is not to add any "new" features, but just to get the ones that were supposed to work in the '99 version working. Those gamers who bought FOOTBALL PRO 99 and don't want to entirely bail on the product can sign up to be on the "FOOTBALL PRO Home Team" at [www.sierrasports.com](http://www.sierrasports.com). Members will receive a \$20 rebate towards FOOTBALL PRO 2000, a t-shirt, periodic beta patches, and access to a dedicated Web site where development issues can be discussed.

Sierra's release of FOOTBALL PRO 99 typifies everything that is wrong with the attitude of game publishers these days, but the recall is a good step towards reparation. Let's hope that they've learned their lesson, and don't take to the playing field again until they have a real game on their hands. They're not likely to get the ball back a third time. **JEFF GREEN**

## TOP 10 BEST SELLING GAMES OF 1998 SOURCE: PC DATA

RANK	TITLE PUBLISHER	UNITS SOLD	TOTAL DOLLARS
1	StarCraft Havas Interactive	746,964	\$31,156,027
2	Deer Hunter GT Interactive	638,278	\$11,648,214
3	Myst Learning Co.	560,734	\$9,969,973
4	Microsoft Flight Simulator Microsoft	509,048	\$22,570,812
5	Deer Hunter II 3D GT Interactive	470,764	\$8,662,287
6	Titanic Adventure out of Time Havas Interactive	436,198	\$10,268,352
7	Lego Island Learning Co.	404,856	\$10,230,067
8	Diablo Havas Interactive	373,483	\$10,446,761
9	Age of Empires Microsoft	367,144	\$13,490,909
10	Riven Learning Co.	363,374	\$14,158,340



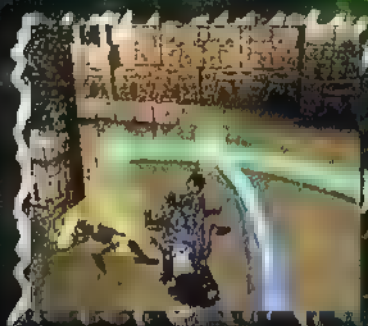
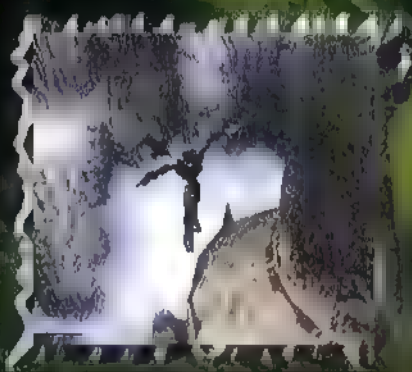


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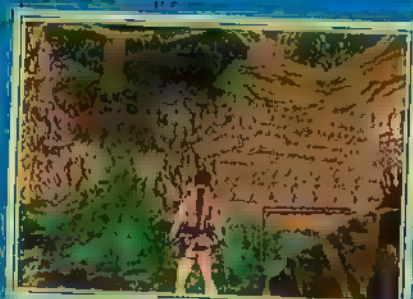
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9.1 rating

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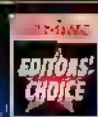
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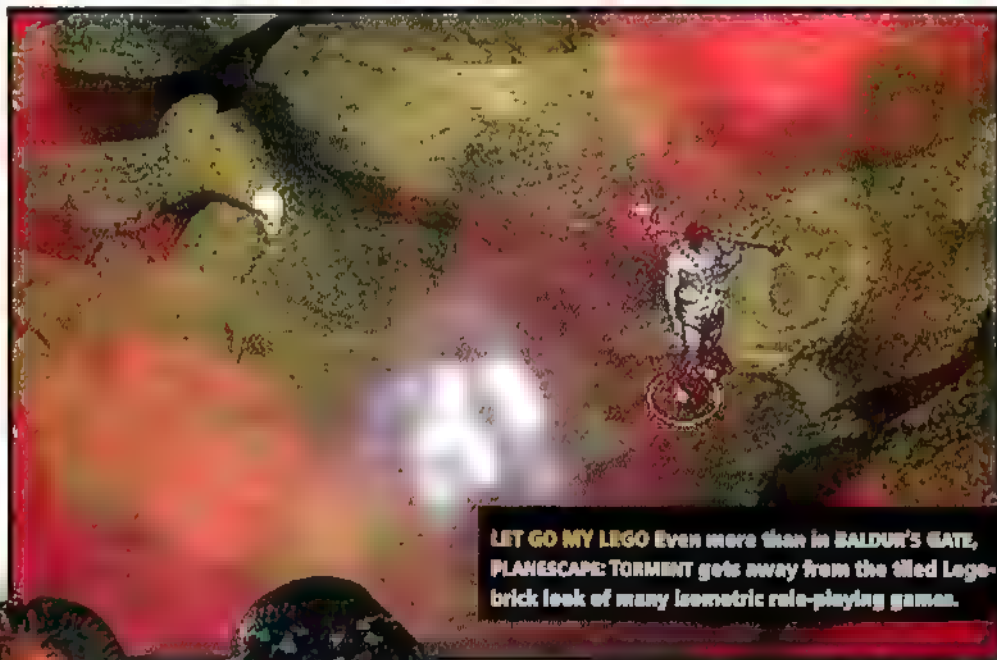
# Planescape: Torment

*AD&D As Only the Makers of FALLOUT and BALDUR'S GATE Can Do It*

by Johnny L. Wilson

If the characters in PLANESCAPE: TORMENT seem a little disturbing, it's because they are. Characters who dismember themselves and their enemies in order to improve their armor or obtain new weapons aren't exactly run-of-the-mill, even in role-playing games. If the landscape seems a little more colorful than the characters, that's because it is. The characters, though immortal, tend to bear the grayish tinges of their many deaths, while the 16-bit color landscape pushes the Bioware Infinity engine (used in BALDUR'S GATE) to new limits.

As in BALDUR'S GATE, the engine features global lighting so that the cycles of dawn to dusk matter, but it also features special lighting effects for the 20-plus magical spells, spells that will mesmerize the gamer almost as much as their victims in the gameworld. Yet, the biggest change in aesthetic is that the



**LET GO MY LEGO** Even more than in BALDUR'S GATE, PLANESCAPE: TORMENT gets away from the tiled Lego-brick look of many isometric role-playing games.

engine now accommodates huge animated structures and sprites such as you never saw in BALDUR'S GATE.

If you thought that characterization and alignment made BALDUR'S GATE interesting, wait until you see what the folks at Interplay's Black Isle Studios have done with

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT. Remember those nice touches like interneine rivalry between alignments in your party and characters who responded to situations based on their Charisma attribute?

Remember the comic relief when chaotic characters would their shout battle cries in medieval trash talk? PLANESCAPE: TORMENT one-ups these award-winning advances.

## No Token Tolkien

In PLANESCAPE: TORMENT, you get a



### Planescape: Torment

**GENRE:** Role-Playing

**RELEASE DATE:** Q2 '99

**DEVELOPER:** Black Isle Studios

**PUBLISHER:** Interplay Productions

party of up to five characters. These characters are not simply rehashes of the typical AD&D worlds. One such character is a talking—perhaps we should say insulting—skull. One might suggest that this talking skull is the equivalent of having the host of the *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK* game show as your constant companion. Sure, the skull is occasionally useful, but he's definitely funny in an acerbic way. If you don't feel like a berk (the *Planescape* equivalent to "Wilson" in William Gibson's classic *Neuromancer*) whenever you do something wrong, he'll make you feel like the supreme addle-cove (another *Planescape* term for idiot).

Further, *PLANESCAPE* transforms dwarves into centaur-like creatures called Bariaurs. They will be welcome additions to your party as both fierce fighters and congenial sojourners—as long as you don't serve meat or befriend any giants. Elf characters on the traditional AD&D Prime Material Plane are now Githzerai. Githzerai will go berserk when encountering mind flayers or Githyanki, their ancient, leathery-skinned, fanged enemies. Tieflings are the paranoid, loner obverse of the Prime Material Plane's Halflings. Instead of being sociable, these clever

thieves (at least, they are best suited to be great thieves) believe that life is out to get them. They make great point persons, however, due to their bonuses on saving rolls. As in *BALDUR'S GATE*, the design team has been careful to make sure that *ROLE*-playing is part of the consideration whenever you enter into party management. Why, you might even find that someone in your party is a backstabbing traitor. Stranger things have happened.

Most importantly, the difference in the way *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* handles characterization is that you are constantly generating your character on the fly. In life after life and death after death, your amnesiac character is continuously defining his identity, his attributes, and his belief sys-

tem. The game revolves around this discovery process and you'll curse every death because it will take away portions of your memory and force you to reinvent yourself. Like one of Michael Moorcock's eternal warriors, you'll find that wielding extreme power and venturing where mortals fear to tread is a mixed blessing and curse. Once you build your character's reputation, the gameworld will react to it whether you like it or not. In other words, *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* doesn't suffer from lack of ambition. It embodies (and, at times, disembodies) ambition.

### I Don't Believe It

In spite of the brilliant use of characterization to motivate and stimulate, the true uniqueness of



**HEAD-LINER** Your disembodied companion—like many of the richly scripted nonplayer characters in the game—combines acerbic wit with a low threshold on his B.S. detector.



**ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL** Not only are the player characters in *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* larger than the ones in *BALDUR'S GATE*, but so are some of the monsters to be encountered.

*PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* is the fact that everything takes place on different planes within the multiverse. Most of the AD&D universe deals with the Prime Material Plane in intricate detail. *Planescape* defines the multiverse as an intricate series of rings. Sigil, the city on the edge of forever (may Harlan Ellison pardon my theft of his title as a handy descriptor), is a ring; the Outlands are rings; the Outer Planes form a ring; and the Elemental Planes make up a ring. The Great Road allows one to traverse all of the planes within the Outlands as though one were gently caressing the jewels on an expensive pinky ring. This structure guarantees that *Planescape* adventures (of which, we hope, *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* is merely the first) range farther and consist of more variety than those adventures on the Prime Material Plane.

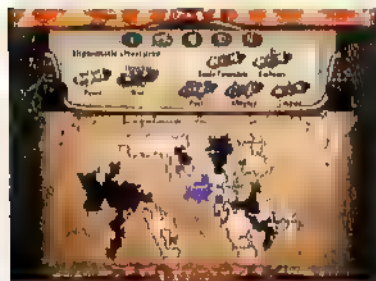
Most significant, however, *Planescape* is made up of a wild variety of factions who serve, in original *Planescape* (the people and paper game) designer Zeb Cook's words, as "philosophers



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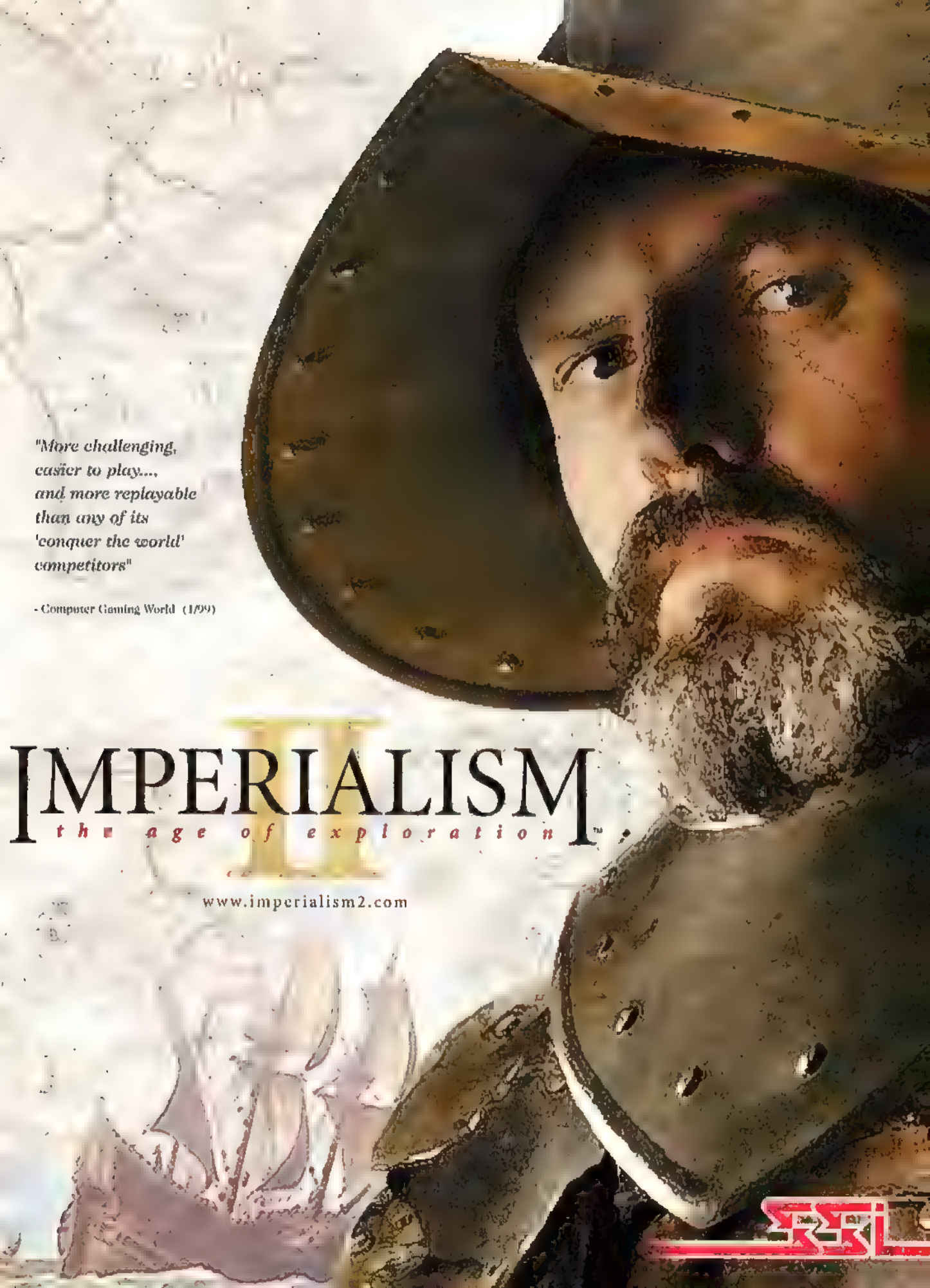
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## PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

with clubs." These factions all operate under specific belief systems and will expect your character to find his place within them, as well.

The Athar believe that all of the powers or gods are cosmic Elmer Gantry's or Wizards of Oz. Looking behind the curtain proves that no one is there, or at least no one that you expected. The Believers of the Source are naïve extrapolations of the biblical precept that "All things work together for good." They see all existence as one big preliminary examination; beings move from test to test in order to be tempered like steel. The Bleak Cabal sounds almost onomatopoeic when you consider that they represent nihilism in the extreme. The Doomguard serve as the angels of entropy within the *Planescape* universe. This faction isn't actively destructive. They serve as a passive sonar, waiting alertly for do-gooders who might get in the way of the natural entropic designs of the multiverse. The Dustmen sound like a clan based on T.S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men." They believe that "life's a joke," hence serving as *Planescape's* version of the existentialist movement, in the manner of a Jean-Paul Sartre, a Eugene Ionesco, or a Samuel Beckett.

Want to join a faction that believes in the ultimate manifest destiny? Join The Fated. Feel more comfortable with legalists that make the Pharisees of Judaism in the first century seem like laissez-faire moral relativists? You want The Fraternity of Order. Want to emulate the anomie and anarchy of the multiverse? Enlist in the libertarian ranks of The Free League. Want to actively create anarchy by overthrowing the corrupt (by definition, all) powers that be? Join The Revolutionary League.

If you don't want to submit to the harmony of the multiverse, The Harmonium (pardon me if this faction resonates a little too closely to a militant version of the Christian Right) will force you to do so. The Mercykillers, on the

other hand, are not for the squeamish. Avid proponents of the Death Penalty, this faction believes that Justice cannot triumph without a swift and merciless prosecution of offenders. The Signers are the epitome of eclecticism and moral relativity; The Society of

that "Parting is all we know of heaven/And all we need of hell." In the case of *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT*, those lines might be changed to "Dying is all we know of heaven," since this afterlife, this seeming limitless existence, offers both the heavenly redemption of

most rare confluence in computer games: intellectual stimulation, visceral satisfaction, and aesthetic inspiration.

But if the game disappoints, we just might have to capture the design team with a sticky, barbed Canoeleth's tongue and



**SPELLBOUND** In *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT*, the Black Isle Studios design team has accomplished even better spell effects with the *BALDUR'S GATE* lighting engine.

Sensation are the Epicures of *Planescape*; and The Transcendent Order finds meaning in Action. As you would expect, The Xaositects believe that the multiverse is chaos and that there is no meaning whatsoever to it. The Outsiders are often called "The Clueless" because they have no ties, no belief system.

In order for *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* to reach its full potential, the game engine will have to balance factions as carefully as *BALDUR'S GATE* does alignment. Before we saw *BALDUR'S GATE*, we would have been skeptical, but we now eagerly await the next advance in computer role-playing. *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* has the potential to be the richest role-playing game ever placed on the computer. We hope it reaches that potential.

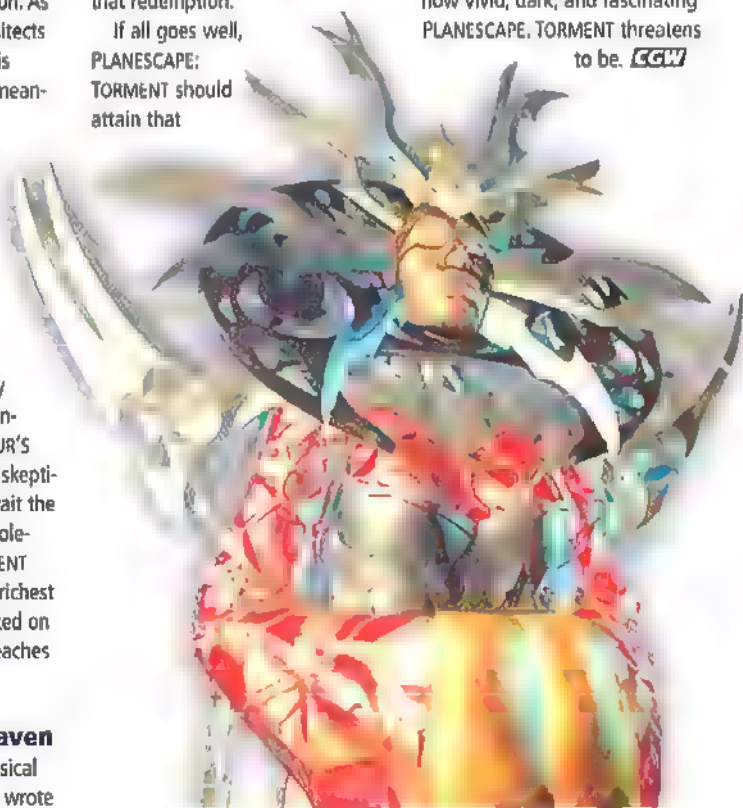
### All We Know of Heaven

America's great metaphysical poet, Emily Dickinson, once wrote

the protagonist's self-discovery and the hell of trying to achieve that redemption.

If all goes well, *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* should attain that

dismember their coding hands to use on a competitor's game. That's how vivid, dark, and fascinating *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* threatens to be. **EGW**





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# HAIL CAESAR, YOUR

## ACTOR

Can't put my lines again or the director said he'd turn me over to the lion tamers. "Et tu, Brute?" No, that's not right. "Blau Brunhilda?" Arghh!!

## VINTNOR

Look at this! I've got grapes rotting on the vine! With the shipbuilders on strike, I can't ship my wine to the rest of the Empire. My warehouse is full, and boy do I have a hangover.

## GLADIATOR

I've got to get to the Temple of Mars to make a sacrifice before tonight's contest in the Coliseum. I think I'm losing my touch. Last night the lions nearly took my head off. If only I hadn't missed that last lesson at the Gladiator School.





# PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN!

## CENTURION

March, march, march. Got to keep on the lookout for the Barbarians. Oh yeah, and rumor has it the Carthaginians may be on the move again. Wait! Is that a camel over there?

## PRIEST

I don't know what the world's coming to these days. Young people run wild in the streets, forgetting all about the gods. I don't know where I'm going to find enough Vestal Virgins this year.

# CAESAR III

BUILD A BETTER ROME

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-Computer Games Strategy Plus

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# Magic and Mayhem

*A Great Blend of RPG and Tactical Strategy Brings Sorcery to Life*

by Jesse Hiatt

**Y**ou are a young wizard, fresh from the Academy, on your way to your uncle's laboratory to begin your apprenticeship. When you arrive, your uncle is nowhere to be found, and by the looks of the lab, he must have left in a hurry. As you inspect the premises for clues to your uncle's disappearance, you find a map that details the route that he must have taken. You feel compelled to take the journey yourself in hopes that you can find him. You board his flying

balloon and head off to parts unknown. The flying contraption soon finds its way into a vortex that sucks you in and deposits you upon a dark and mysterious world. The landing destroys your only way off the planet, leaving you with just one choice:

to journey forth and seek out your destiny. Thus begins the epic experience of *MAGIC AND MAYHEM*.

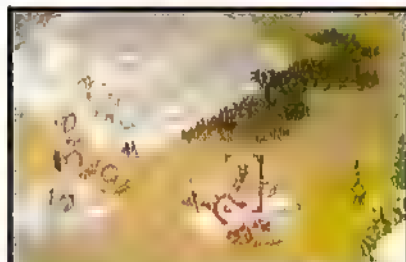
OK, so we've heard similar setups before. Still, playing this game really *does* make you feel like a full-fledged wizard. It feels as if every possible aspect was tuned to achieve the best continuity and immersion possible. A lot of your time is spent developing your character, selecting spells, and referring to your invaluable compendium of information, the *Grimoir* (see sidebar). In many games, all of this activity would break the flow, but here you feel like a wizard checking his dog-eared notes. The distribution of experience points and selection of spells are not at all superfluous, but a critical part of getting ready to enter a new level.

What sets *MAGIC AND MAYHEM* apart from the typical Clone & Conquer is not only the excellent adventure/RPG elements, but also the depth of strategy in both the combat and non-combat portions of the game. For example, the typical RTS strategy of "build huge hordes as fast as you can" is thwarted by restricting the number of creatures your wizard can summon. This ensures that you can achieve victory only by using the appropriate forces at the appropriate time.

You will find that the various creature attributes really do affect the behavior of the creatures you control. A unicorn, for example, is intelligent and powerful, but shy—exactly what you would expect from such a familiar mythic creature. The unicorn's hooves and single horn are its only weapons,

## The Mayhem Part

Once you are properly prepared, it's on to the next area, where the exploring begins. When combat is necessary, you must summon forces to duke it out in the familiar real-time strategy



**DANCING SKELETONS** The skeleton/elf one-two punch is most powerful in the early game.



**COOKING BROWNIES** This horde of pebble-throwing brownies is getting toasted by a mighty meteor shower spell.

## Magic & Mayhem

**GENRE:** Strategy  
**RELEASE DATE:** Q2 '99  
**DEVELOPER:** Mythos  
**PUBLISHER:** Bethesda Softworks



## Portmanteau

The ability to cast spells comes from magical artifacts. These are arranged in the right portion of the Portmanteau. On the left are the talismans, which activate a spell for use when combined with an artifact. There are three types of magic: Chaos, Neutral, and Law (Red, Green, and Blue respectively). Each talisman can be used for only one type of magic. You can use experience points to add talismans to any of the three categories. There are summon spells that give you units to control, like trolls or skeletons; elemental spells, like the mighty meteor shower; and other forms of sorcery, like raising the dead or turning enemies to stone. Difficult decisions have to be made in the Portmanteau, and you'll need the Grimoir to make sure that they are informed decisions. This aspect of the gameplay is highly reminiscent of building a deck for the card game *Magic the Gathering*.

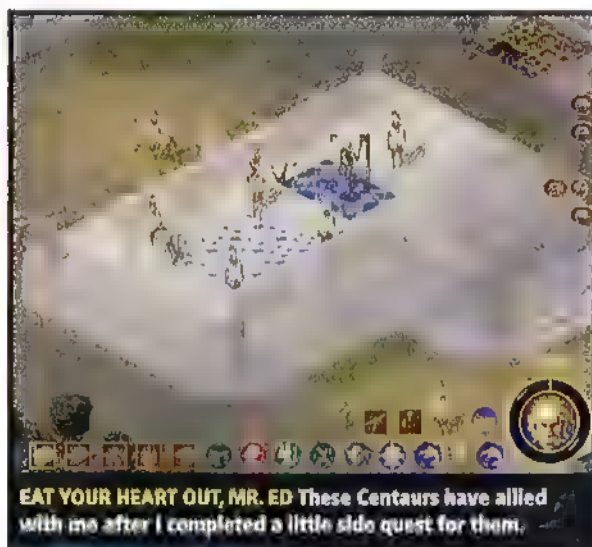
and these can only be used up close. It will actively defend itself, and will attack when ordered, too, but it's likely to back off if the going gets tough.

Skeletons, on the other hand, are anything but shy. Then again, they aren't that smart, either. Skeletons won't back out of a fight, but you might find them standing around staring at the

small Brynne's trolls, elves, phoenixes, and centaurs are just a few of the other creatures at your disposal for battle against wizards.

## The Life of a WizNerd

Just as important as your tactical strategies on the battlefield are the choices you make using your Portmanteau (see sidebar)—your box for selecting and organizing spells. Though you can only prepare a limited number of spells before you explore a level, there



are seemingly endless combinations possible. Moreover, the computer updates the AI after every battle, learning and adapting from your actions. This ensures replayability, even when you're stuck on a tough level.

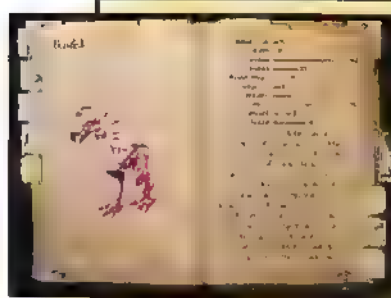
There are a lot of great spells from which to choose, but the most critical are the summoning spells. All of the creatures that you can summon have widely different attributes (the details of which are laid out in the *Grimoir*). And all spells have to be considered for their mana cost, their effectiveness against the units you can expect to encounter, and their usefulness in the terrain in which you are about to embark.

In addition to the gripping gameplay, the art direction is also top-notch in *MAGIC AND MAYHEM*. The music by Simon Harrison and the Afrofunk Sound System is powerful, setting the tone for this game.

Perfectly visually, the game is a shining example of the top-down isometric style (à la *STAR WARS*), complete with charming, lively characters. I'll admit it—I've always been a fan of the Mythos folks (along with the rest of CGW's editors), and it's obvious from the care they've put into this game that they haven't lost their touch.

Every time I thought I'd seen everything *MAGIC AND MAYHEM* had to offer, another aspect of the design would bring me back for more. The European version is already a big hit overseas, and barring any major snafus, this should be Mythos' biggest hit on this side of the big pond since the original X-COM. **CGW**

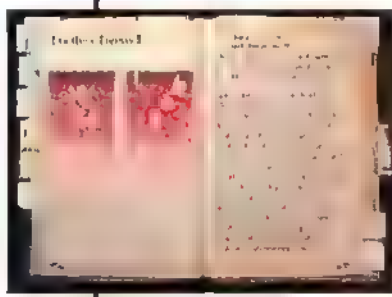
Jesse Hiatt has been perfecting his zombie dance of joy for multiplayer *HALF-LIFE*, in between sessions of the old wargame favorite, *Empires at Arms*.



## Grimoir

This book is an invaluable tool that will often come in handy while playing *MAGIC AND MAYHEM*. It is well written and complete. It does not cover computer issues (like key commands), but that's explained in the manual. By only including information that your character needs to know, the book helps maintain the immersive qualities of the experience. The *Grimoir* has the feel of an old wizard's tome instead of a complicated online manual.

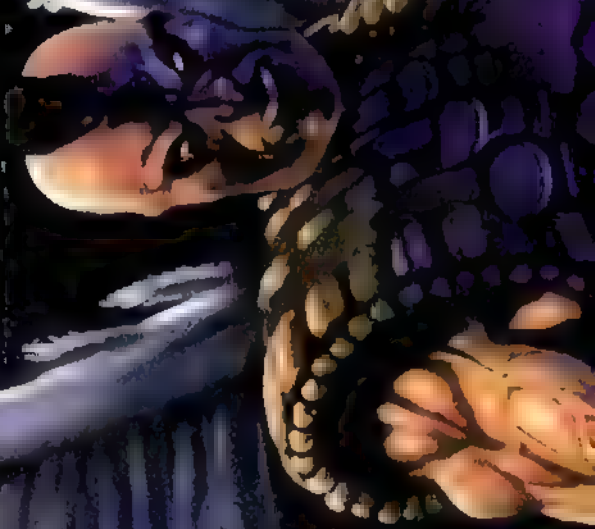
As you might imagine a wizard's book to be, this one is packed with information. You will learn how to summon dozens of different creatures throughout the game. Each of the creatures has 12 attributes, and you will find this data and a short story about each one. All your spells are described in detail as well, with mana costs and other pertinent info. You will also find herein tales of all the lands to which you have traveled.





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# Man of War II

*Strategy First Has the Enemy in Sight*

by Johnny I. Wilson

**W**hether you're more inspired by the real-life exploits of Nelson, Jones, Jervis, Howe, and Blücher, or the fictional conquests of Aubrey, Hornblower, Bolitho, Drinkwater, and Ramage, *MAN OF WAR II* should be a dream come true. Too often, the thrilling days of fighting sail have been obscured by turn-based rules, minutiae, the capacity for unrealistic micro management, or the less-satisfying arcade aspects of accelerated-time action. The original *MAN OF WAR* changed that with a near-simulation aspect to the sea battles. Of course, the near-simulation quality is a two-edged sword when you're dealing with relatively slow vessels and limited weapon range.

## Career Broadside

Yet, like many other games based on the age of fighting sail, *MAN OF WAR* was merely a collection of historical battles that did not allow for the more glorious aspect of career advancement. Many officers went to war in that age to earn income by taking prizes; to clear a tarnished family or personal name by winning glory in battle; or to satisfy their social-climbing ambition by moving up to flag rank.

The new career mode in *MAN OF WAR II* is relatively simple, but effective. When you create a character, you provide a name and type in your own character



**PORT BROADSIDE** Smoke billows after a broadside has been fired at this Spanish warship. Note that the Spanish vessel cannot bring her broadside to bear as the British warship manages to cross her "T."

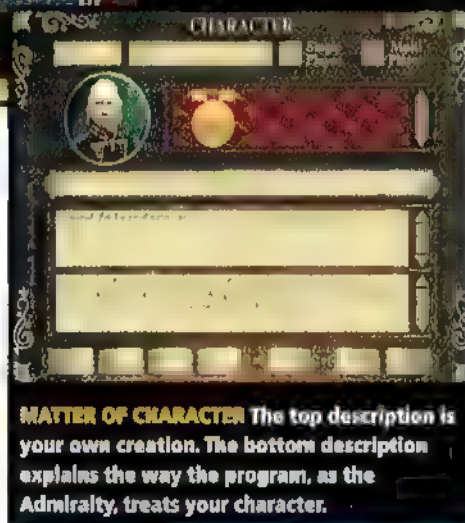
synopsis in the ten paragraphs of the character screen. You text does not affect the game, but the text in the second paragraph reflects the private qualities of your character, that are represented in the game, as well as evaluating your in-game accomplishments. By successfully completing scenarios, your character receives favorable mentions in this analogy to the *Naval Gazette*, and you have the chance to move up in rank. Interestingly enough, opponents will be able to access both your view of your character and the Admiralty's view of your character prior to engaging in a multiplayer match.

## All Aboard, It's a Party

Another aspect missing from most age of sail games to hit the PC has been the capacity to board. Boarding actions and cutting out expeditions were a necessary part of the era and, except for some of the earlier efforts on the Apple II, have been largely ignored in games appearing on the PC. Although not implemented in the version we played, *MAN OF WAR II* will feature a camera angle that pans to an exterior view of the two ships involved in boarding. From that angle, the player can control the boarding

crew and continue to fire guns from his own ship. The basic commands for controlling the crew (attempt to disengage, stand ground, or press attack) are relatively limited, but they beat the options provided in most games about the age of sail.

The rest of *MAN OF WAR II* is essentially like the original. You get to set the tactical doctrine for your ship and the other ships. You also use the mouse interface to change the crew allocation (particularly as your crew begins to attrit) to prioritizing the guns, sails, rigging, damage control, or preparing for boarding. You still navigate by observing wind direction from the symbol on the chart, and then adjusting your heading via the compass wheel at the center of the 3D interface. Finally, except for the new boarding option, combat is almost exactly like that in *MAN OF WAR*. You wait until you have the optimal broadside and command your units to fire low at the hull (in the traditional British



**MATTER OF CHARACTER** The top description is your own creation. The bottom description explains the way the program, as the Admiralty, treats your character.

fashion) or high (in the traditional French fashion). Then, you hope they fire effectively.

*MAN OF WAR II* is potentially an ideal game for those who enjoy historical battles, but don't want the frenetic clicking of an arcade or accelerated-time game. Though graphically, *MAN OF WAR II* needs to be careened in order to remove some of the barnacles, it offers enough of historical flavor to satisfy the would-be post-captain as well as the bonus of attempting to craft your own fictitious officer's career to resemble those of an Aubrey, Hornblower, or Ramage. **K&W**

*Johnny Wilson relaxes from the work of sinking British frigates with an occasional game of SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI.*



**GENRE:** Wargame  
**RELEASE DATE:** Q2 '99  
**DEVELOPER:** Strategy First  
**PUBLISHER:** Strategy First

TAKE THE HILL. THE EARTH TREMBLING. BLACK WITH BLOOD.  
HEAVY FOOTSTEPS DISSOLVE INTO A STEADY RHYTHM OF  
THUNDEROUS BLASTS. MINDS AND LEGS NUMB. GET TO THE  
HILL. FIERY ARROWS RAINING FROM ABOVE. BLACK WAKES  
WEAVING A SUFFOCATING BLANKET OF FEAR. MY MEN  
CHOKING THEIR FINAL BREATHS. JUST MAKE IT TO THE  
HILL. SCREAMS FROM BEHIND? ARE WE FLANKED? SHADOWS  
ADVANCING LIKE A DEATH SHROUD. THE HILL.  
GET TO THE HILL.

6 December  
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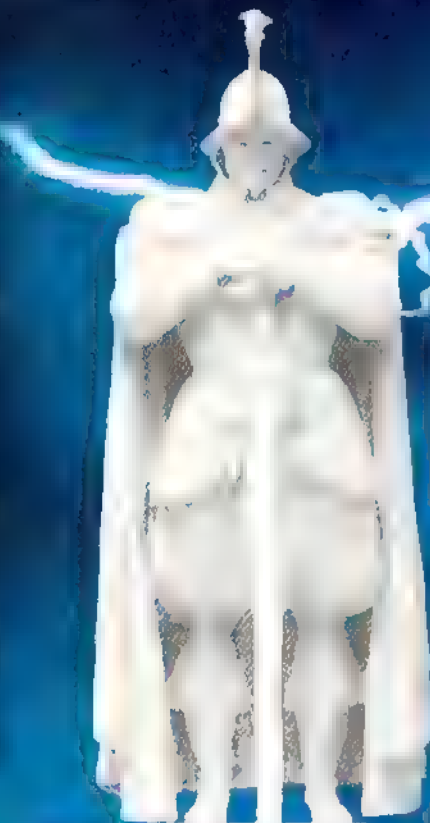
— GamePower

★★★★

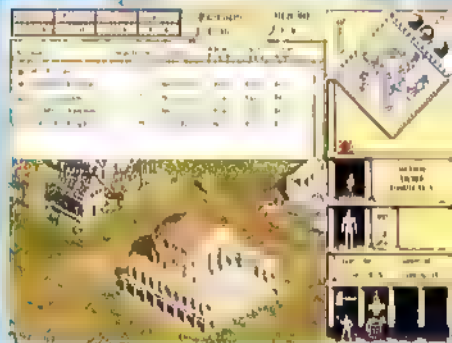
— Computer Games Strategy Plus



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for

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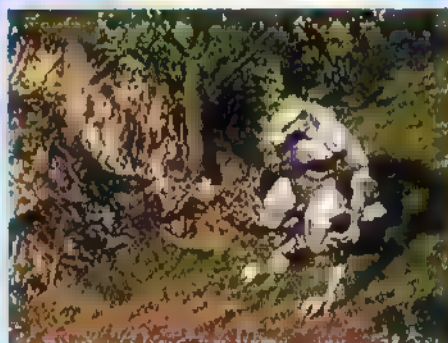
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Masters of economics,  
but watch out.  
They're tricky!

**CARDASSIAN**  
Their ruthlessness,  
efficiency and stealth  
make for a lethal  
combination.

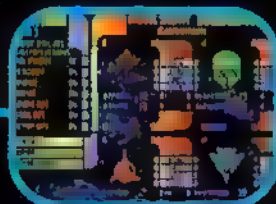
Building an empire takes time. You need to be diplomatic, technologically advanced, and stealthy. And sometimes, war is the only solution. You choose from one of the five major alliances. You'll get all their strengths. All their weaknesses. And every decision matters.



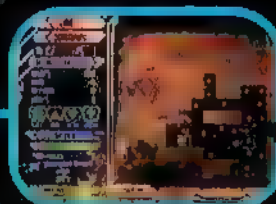
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# Midtown Madness

*Room to Roam on the Mean Streets of Chicago*

by Jesse Hiatt

If you think that the driving genre could use a shot in the arm—or more accurately, a visceral pileup on the side of the road—then MIDTOWN MADNESS is likely to have you breaking your trusty PC driving wheel out of mothballs. With 10 vehicles to choose from, including a city bus and the new Beetle, you are let loose on the mean streets of Chicago.

## Virtual Sprawl

What really sets this title apart is that, instead of giving you a typical driving-game track with regional landmarks thrown in (à la SAN FRANCISCO RUSH), here you get treated to a virtual city to roam, with block after block of fantastic-looking metropolitan sprawl with realistic traffic patterns. If you crave competition, the variety of racing modes let you set up various routes with periodic checkpoints through the city. If you tire of this, you can always stray from the main track, and sometimes find yourself a shortcut. My favorite, though, is *Roam* mode, which feels just like driving in a real dense urban environment. Don't want to wait at that red light? Gun your engine, take to the sidewalk (sending pedestrians running for cover), and speed through the intersection—causing the milk truck coming the other way to slam into a mailbox as you speed off, leaving a five-car pileup in your wake.

This is definitely the best cure for road rage to come to the PC in years, perhaps ever. If you so desire, you can obey the traffic



**SPANKS WILL FLY** If you don't like the way I drive, get off the sidewalk!

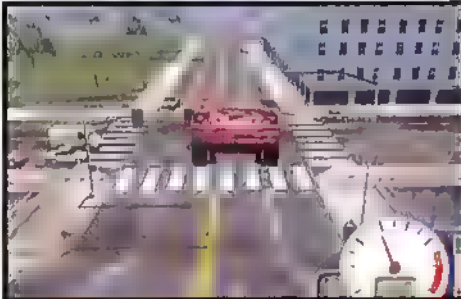
laws and the game will play like a city driving simulator. But if you've spent as much time driving in the city as I have, you'll revel in the chance to finally drive like a complete maniac. The city bus is a good choice for causing mayhem, as it can plow through a crowded intersection and keep on truckin'. As a driving environment, MIDTOWN MADNESS is truly unprecedented in its size and scope. Natives of Chicago will not just recognize certain landmarks, but are treated to a fairly accurate model (although somewhat condensed) of their hometown.

## I Can See for Miles and Miles

One of the most notable features of MIDTOWN MADNESS is its amazing depth of field. You can see really far down the street, with no artificial fogging or any polygonal pieces of terrain suddenly popping up on the edge of the screen. The designers have reduced overdraw by using a tool that eliminates the unused (unseen) portions of the city. The geometry has four levels of detail, thus reducing the polygon count and leaving room for all of the pedestrians, mailboxes, street lights and parking meters that add so much realism to the city.

Unfortunately, it would seem that the developers still need to bring the car physics and AI up to the level of their great game environment. In the build I was playing, I didn't win races because I was driving faster, but because the competition got stuck driving into corners. Initially, we had a concern that cars don't seem to accurately register what speed they were going. For example, a crash at ten miles per hour sent my Mustang into the air, and when I took it up to 140, it didn't feel much faster than highway speed. But when we raced in "widescreen mode" it was easy to feel the adrenaline rush of acceleration you'd expect.

So, if the car physics, AI, and damage modeling can rise up to the level of the gameworld, MIDTOWN MADNESS will be a most spectacular driving game. At the very least, it will break new ground by freeing the player from the track. If Angel Studios is able to pull everything together, no



**NO STOPPING FOR PEDS** We test the aerodynamics of our Mustang off a drawbridge, with no perceptible compromise in quality.



**BEETLE AT BAT** This is one runner it'd be hard to throw out at home.

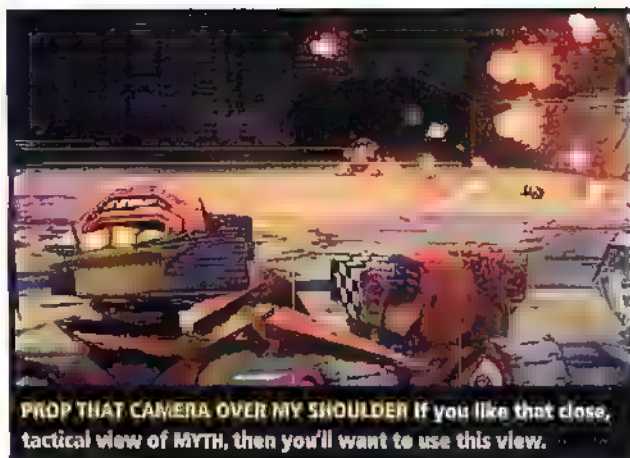
doubt everyone who's not from Chicago will be begging for an expansion pack of their own city, so that they can run the same red-light that they had to wait at on their way home from work. What a nice problem that would be for the design team to have! **CGW**

Jesse Hiatt took time off from his busy racing schedule in GRAND PRIX LEGENDS to preview this game.

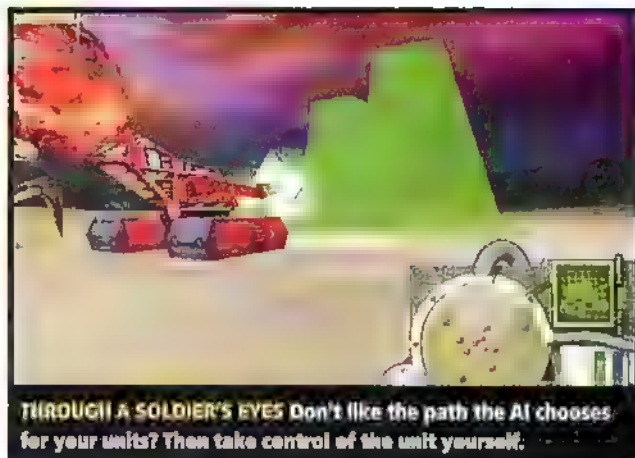
## Midtown Madness

**GENRE:** Driving  
**RELEASE DATE:** Q2 '98  
**DEVELOPER:** Angel Studios  
**PUBLISHER:** Microsoft





**PROP THAT CAMERA OVER MY SHOULDER** If you like that close, tactical view of MYTH, then you'll want to use this view.



**THROUGH A SOLDIER'S EYES** Don't like the path the AI chooses for your units? Then take control of the unit yourself.

# Machines

## Acclaim Plans to Spice up the 3D Real-time Arena With This Game

by Thierry Nguyen

**T**hank MYTH for inspiring other real-time strategy games to go 3D. Though, most of the next 3D games either use a medieval setting, or a far-flung future with starships. MACHINES is one of those rare traditional real-time games that bring a few 3D twists into the genre.

### Freedom Fighter

As the title suggests, you'll mostly be in control of robotic machines. There are no living units around here; you build robots that make factories, which then make even more robots. The campaign system reminds me of TIE FIGHTER, where you select which planets you want to perform missions on, and if a mission seems too hard on one planet, you can jump to another to carry out a minicampaign and come back to the original planet later.

**Machines**  
**GENRE:** Strategy  
**RELEASE DATE:** Q2 '99  
**DEVELOPER:** Charybdis  
**PUBLISHER:** Acclaim

Like many other real-time games, this one focuses on establishing a base, building up your forces, and then wreaking havoc on the enemy. But the campaign does offer a few twists to that standard style of gameplay: In a few missions you have to steal technology from the other side; in another, a Blizzard-style installation mission, you have to direct a team to carry out an assault against a space station.

### Doom With a View

The biggest twist to the gameplay is the 3D feel. You can play this game from not one, but *three* perspectives. The first is the normal, slightly slanted overhead; that is, it's the overhead view of COMMAND & CONQUER or TOTAL ANNIHILATION, but slanted slightly in order to take advantage of all three dimensions. Then, there is the slightly odd over-the-shoulder view, where you're on ground level along with your units. This viewpoint is more for the MYTH player, in that you can pan around the battlefield and get a closer look at your units in action; this view seems most useful for tactical battles but not for base construction.

Then, there's the ever-present first-person perspective. With this

addition, MACHINES becomes something like a BATTLEZONE, where the game combined action and strategy. Though, this isn't the focus of MACHINES, and the addition of the first-person perspective seems more for fine-tuning your attacks rather than a serious method of playing the game. For example, if you're in an installation mission, and you want to sneak around, it's better to use first-person mode to direct

struction is creating Geo Locators and having them scour the terrain, rather than making a beeline to the piles of crystal and gas laying next to your base.

Another interesting change is the research tree. You have to build two labs (civilian and military) and then staff each lab. Technicians supply research points, which are the resources used by the various labs, and there are varying levels of technicians. For

example, you need a Level 2 technician in order to build Level 2 machinery. And the new techs are balanced; it's not just a matter of "build a Level 2 reaper and be done with it," each tech upgrade has upsides and downsides. Hence, the strategy isn't simply who can build the highest-level units but, rather, who can use a mix of units at varying tech levels.

Overall, MACHINES looks like it adds a few twists to the standard

real-time genre. Its 3D doesn't go as far out as, say, CONQUEST or HOMEWORLD, but for a more traditional real-time game, it's a nice addition. How well real-time gamers will take to its usage of multiple perspectives remains to be seen. **CAN**

*Strategically speaking, Thierry Nguyen likes to live out his dream of crushing the UN via SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI.*



**DEATH FROM ABOVE** And as always, there's the traditional RTS overhead viewpoint for the purists.

the machine itself rather than let the AI pathfind its way around.

Besides the perspective changes, there are also a few tweaks to basic gameplay to distinguish itself. For example, you don't just find resource nodes out in the open; you need to make a Geo Locator that will scan the terrain and deposit beacons indicating good mineral deposits for you to build your mines on top of. So the first few minutes of base con-

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# Septerra Core

*Monolith's Recent Acquisition Looks to Be a Console RPG Done Right*

by Thierry Nguyen

Creating a role-playing game nowadays seems a lot like acting out a soap opera. Look at the development cycle for either *RETURN TO KRONDOR* or *FALLOUT 2*, for example. While the games were being developed, there were many behind-the-scenes antics, such as important people coming and going, and even the rise and fall of entire companies. *SEPTERRA CORE* joins those ranks, as its development is even more storied. At one point everyone on staff was working on the game for free, before they split for a short period. Monolith saw an opportunity and took it, acquiring the game. Now the development team is back in gear.

## Not So Final a Fantasy

Of course, one wonders why someone would go to the trouble of picking up a title with a shaky history. Well, look at *FINAL FANTASY VII*. As technically flawed as that title was, it opened the PC door for the console model of role-playing games—games in which story, rather than freedom of movement, was the focus of the game. *RETURN TO KRONDOR* followed this story-driven model, and *SEPTERRA CORE* hopes also to mine this emerging RPG motherlode.

The game is set on a planet that consists of seven continents orbiting a computer core. Every 100 years, the continents line up in such a fashion that the computer core can be accessed and controlled. As Maya, a resident of the garbage-fill



**A NIVE OF SCUM AND...** The environments range from this alien- and robot-filled bar to weird airships and ornate palaces.

continent, you notice some ships descending from the continent above. The plot begins with Maya deciding to warn someone about the approaching ships.

The use of the seven floating continents allows for a large variety of environments in which to travel. The lower you descend, the harsher the environment becomes, and the less sophisticated the technology. The game isn't restricted to the typical fantasy or sci-fi environs, and looks to do a nice job of mixing typical settings in order to create new ones. The graphics are very pleasing to the eye, both in backdrops and in effects such as shadows, rain, and very well done snow.

## A Party Player

The gameplay is like other console RPGs: You manipulate a party of characters across various landscapes and have them talk to NPCs and/or engage in combat in order to move the story forward. Most of it will be played from a third-person isometric perspective, à la *FALLOUT* or *BALDUR'S GATE*. However, some areas of the game will use a more panoramic side-view.

Party management will be similar to that in *BALDUR'S GATE* and typical console games. You control three party-members at a time,

Maya and two others (from a pool of eight). Each party member has detailed motivations and goals, and, as in *BALDUR'S GATE*, some party members simply don't like each other—and will act on it.

Combat will be like the odd, phased-turn/real-time combination found in console RPGs. Unlike in *FINAL FANTASY VII*, you will see the enemies before battle, instead of having them randomly attack you out of nowhere. The magic system is based on items called "Fate Cards," whereby you equip and combine different cards for different effects. One interesting change for the magic system is the common mana pool; no one has his or her own mana rating. Instead, everyone draws energy from the common pool whenever spells are cast or so forth.

So far, it looks as if *SEPTERRA CORE* is getting the RPG elements right. It has a unique gameworld, which separates it from most tired fantasy fare, the graphics look just right, and it has an interesting combat and magic system. Of course,



**IT'S MY PARTY** One of these characters killed the other one's family. It wouldn't be a good idea to pair these two together in your active party.



**WOLFIN' IT DOWN** Gamers who were annoyed at the "out-of-the-blue" encounters in *FINAL FANTASY VII* will be relieved that *SEPTERRA CORE* shows you the enemies before combat starts.

it's possible that the design approach may put off old-school RPG gamers. But those who enjoyed *FINAL FANTASY VII* or *RETURN TO KRONDOR*, should look out for *SEPTERRA CORE*. **CGW**

*Thierry Nguyen is currently navigating the Nashkel mines in BALDUR'S GATE. He also likes to shout "Butt-kickin' for goodness!" at his monitor, much to the annoyance of his coworkers.*



**GENRE:** Role-Playing  
**RELEASE DATE:** Q3 '99  
**DEVELOPER:** Valleyrie Studios  
**PUBLISHER:** Monolith Productions

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# Soldier of Fortune

*Raven Goes Realistic? And Where Are the Fairies?*

**H**ow do you follow up a really well done third-person fantasy shooter like HERETIC II? Raven looks to answer that question with **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE**, the company's new shooter based on the **QUAKE II** engine. One thing's for certain. This game is decidedly different

from the standard fantasy fare that Raven has produced.

**SOLDIER OF FORTUNE** has you playing a mercenary who is part of a worldwide merc network (shades of **JAGGED ALLIANCE**). Various missions with comparable salaries are offered, and they can be reviewed before committing yourself to them. Once you accept a particular mission, and depending on whether it's a solo or team mission, you can recruit some other mercenaries and purchase equipment for your team. Then you can create a rudimentary plan

(lay out waypoints and so forth) for carrying out the mission, and, finally, just jump in and play.

In a mission, the rest of your mercs will execute the plan you mapped out earlier, and you can assume direct control of one merc at a time; so you can jump from merc to merc and see to tasks such as planting explosives or personally assassinating a target.

Raven is going for realism, both in the look of the game and in the damage model. The enemies are going to be motion-captured, and there will be about 20 individual

parts on the body that can receive and reflect specific damage results. Of course, it remains to be seen whether certain U.S. senators will approve of such imagery as a soldier getting his face blown off in spectacular fashion. Finally, the game will have a toggle set for either realism or gameplay, so fans of both **QUAKE** and **DELTA FORCE** can enjoy the game. The game is slated for release "sometime before Christmas" this year, and we'll have a more detailed look at the title as it develops.

—Thierry Nguyen

## Soldier of Fortune

**GENRE:** Action (with Sim elements)

**RELEASE DATE:** Q3 '99

**DEVELOPER:** Raven Software

**PUBLISHER:** Activision

# Swords and Sorcery

*Bradley's Old-fashioned RPG Is Back on Track*

**A**mbition in a role-playing game is always welcome, but it tends to push back release dates. We last looked at **SWORDS AND SORCERY** in our "Fantasy Face/Off" in **CGW** #171, and a lot has happened since then, both business-wise and designwise.

Even though Virgin/Westwood was acquired by EA late last summer, **SWORDS AND SORCERY** wasn't axed. It was just pushed back to the summer of 1999. So

we decided to check up on the design team's progress...

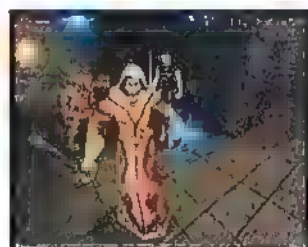
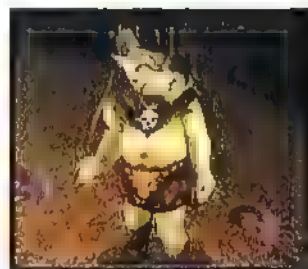
During the past six months, the core elements of the game were developed and are now in place. The artwork for the characters, the enemies, and the environments has been finalized, and all the voice-acting has been recorded. So, the core game is essentially done. Heuristic Park is currently tweaking and balancing the game, confident that it will make its summer release.

Producer John Hight did point out one major change that designer D.W. Bradley has made: the overhaul of the interface. Before, you controlled all six characters at once, and while that was visually impressive, it

really hampered gameplay. Heuristic Park retuned the interface so that you now issue orders first, and your characters then appear and execute their commands one at a time.

To be honest, we were getting a bit worried about **SWORDS AND SORCERY** (especially with all of these company acquisitions and whatnot), but we're relieved to see the project get closer and closer to its final release date, and to see old-fashioned sensibilities mesh with newfangled technology—at least for now. If this game can fulfill its promise—especially in multiplayer mode—we're looking at another happy year for role-playing enthusiasts.

—Thierry Nguyen



## Swords and Sorcery

**GENRE:** RPG

**RELEASE DATE:** Q2 '99

**DEVELOPER:** Heuristic Park

**PUBLISHER:** Westwood Studios

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# Kingpin

## Recruiting and Dialogue in a QUAKE-engine Game?

If there's an action development team known for "theme" games, it's Xatrix. REDNECK RAMPAGE, for example, was essentially the redneck version of DUKE NUKEM. So it seems only appropriate that Xatrix' latest, KINGPIN, would offer a different personality than the QUAKE II engine on which it's based—in this case, the team is moving away from rednecks and onto serious gang turf.

But there's much more to this game than just a change of characters and scenery. Xatrix is aiming to implement features such as the recruiting gang members off the street, the buying and selling of items, and a working dialogue system. The focus of the game is sure to elicit controversy, since you are playing a gang leader and are trying to consolidate power in a rough part of town. Xatrix is also adding things like specific body damage, vehicular control, and team-based AI.

### KINGPIN

GENRE: Action

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '99

DEVELOPER: Xatrix Interactive

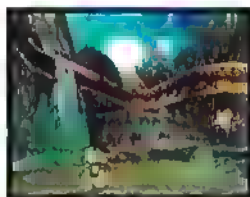
PUBLISHER: Interplay

As we went to press, Xatrix was finalizing the first out of seven episodes. As soon as we get a hands-on piece of the action, our *consigliere* will be in touch. Until then, don't make any travel plans. —Thierry Nguyen

# Rayman 2

## Platform Sensibility in a 3D Environment

According to articles in the media about gaming violence, like the one that appeared recently in *Reader's Digest*, it's well-nigh impossible to find games that the whole family can play. Fortunately, Ubi Soft knows how to fill a niche in a hurry. The original RAYMAN was a solid side-scroller that seemed a bit *too* console-oriented for PC gamers. RAYMAN 2, however, takes the traditional platform style of its predecessor, but places all the action into a 3D world. And an extensive world it is, with a planned 48 levels stretched across 17 different environments. By going to 3D, the Rayman character's range of moves will increase to take advantage of both horizontal and vertical movement. While we'd never admit it on



60 Minutes, even jaded game reviewers might have trouble taking this promising little charmer off their hard drives. —Thierry Nguyen

### RAYMAN 2

GENRE: Action

RELEASE DATE: Q2 '99

DEVELOPER: Ubi Soft

PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft



# Inertia

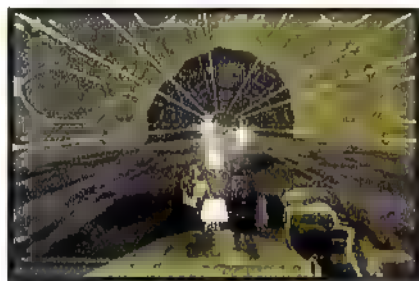
## Spelunking Speedsters Spar in Space

Before you rip great handfuls of hair from your head and cry out "Oh, God, no, not another car combat game!" know this—INERTIA (a working title) is one of the most original entrants into the overworked killer vehicle genre that we've seen in some time. Eschewing the typical postapocalyptic roadways of some hideous future Earth, INERTIA throws the gamer into deep space as a mercenary hired to mine technology for one of five competing corporations. Of course, you'll have to fend off rival mercenaries as well as mechanical beasts all the while negotiating the dangerous tunnels, moving platforms, and more.

An impressive physics-based engine drives the action, leading to vehicles that recoil when firing weapons, handle differently in response to weapon weight and placement, and can be buffeted by moving water. Gravity will be modeled as well, so players will have to deal with the odd gravitational storm as well as arenas

with variable gravity conditions in different portions of the arena.

Over 35 fancifully designed vehicles are fully customizable, with gamers allowed to purchase and adjust armor, engines, weaponry, and every imaginable facet of their vehicle. Money to buy these upgrades is earned by successfully completing the 25+



missions as well as arena duels where players compete for generous cash prizes. You can expect a more in-depth look in a future issue of CGW as soon as we get our twitchy little hands on some working code. —Robert Coffey

### INERTIA

GENRE: Vehicular Shooter

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '99

DEVELOPER: Pseudo Interactive

PUBLISHER: Microsoft

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Let's be honest - building a great racing game that rises above the competition is not an easy task.

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That's when **Real Sports** was brought in. They demonstrated an amazing set of programming tools, experience and desire to build the game we wanted. **Robin Antonick**, President of **Real Sports** and father of six, even races cars on the weekends.

One of the biggest challenges we faced was to make a game that was **accessible to everybody**. To do so, we set out to make a game that would run smoothly on a **P166** with **16 MB RAM** without requiring the use of a 3D graphics accelerator. Of course, we also wanted to make it scream on a **P450** with huge amounts of RAM and dual **Voodoo 2** cards, as well as a variety of other graphics cards.

The game offers menu options that allow the user to adjust the level of detail on the tracks and cars. This was the first step in making the game compatible with as many machines as possible. Items such as **environmental mapping** (a technique that allows for lighting and the environment to reflect off of the car), clip distance (the distance at which the horizon begins to draw in), and polygons per car, all needed to be adjustable as well, on a per machine basis. The frame rate is **exceptional** on a wide selection of machines either with the use of a 3D card or without.

Other potential areas of conflict occurred when trying to make the game compatible with 3D graphics accelerator cards. We made the decision early on to support **Direct 3D**, which will allow us to run on all 3D cards, not only **3Dfx** (in glide mode) like many

accelerated games. However, different 3D card chipsets may support graphics in varying ways. For example, to give the effect that the car is actually racing on the ground, and not hovering over the track, we implemented transparent shadow effect under the car to give it the perspective of being close to the ground. Well, we quickly discovered that not all some 3D cards, transparent shadows were not supported the same across the 3D boards. The result: some shadows looked like shadows, and some shadows looked like magic carpets under the car, not quite the look we were going for. But in the end, our experiments with 3D cards will ensure as much overall compatibility as possible.

The real test of developing a racing game is speed. We can tell you that you're going **300 MPH**, but does it really look and feel that way? The truth is: in videogames, like movies, **special effects play a major role in adding to the experience**. The special effects in racing games is frame rate. For example, you know, the track may be moving at **300 MPH** and your car is standing still. But does it matter as long as the player feels like they're zipping along at top speeds? However it's done, no matter what it takes to move a polygonal car with polygonal tires around a polygonal track in a rectangle monitor on top of your desk, **we've been able to transform frame rate into an incredible sensation of speed**.

So, as we head into the final months before release, we've turned our development challenges into some awesome game features:

- **10 Extreme tracks** that include everything from jumps and high-banked turns to corkscrew loops and **300 MPH speeds**.

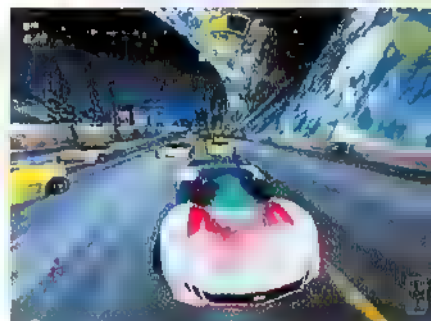


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•Serious competition. Doesn't it seem like every racing game out there lets you smash your opponents into the wall and they don't mind? Well, we didn't want that. If the term artificial intelligence wasn't so overused, then you can say ours is really awesome. But instead, let's just say watch out for the car that you just sent flying into the wall at 230 MPH - it will remember you.

•Intense graphics that, to put it bluntly, rock!!! The tracks are set in richly detailed, brightly colored environments that are soaked with some pretty impressive lighting effects. But of course, if you're good at this game, the environments will look like colorful blurs.

Does all of this make Jeff Gordon® XS Racing™ the best racing game on the PC? Well, we'll give you the same answer that Jeff Gordon gives when he's asked if he's the best NASCAR driver around ---

"The competition is fierce out there and one day you can be the best and the next day you're a spec in somebody's rear view mirror. But, if the fans just can't get enough of the action, then we must be doing something right."

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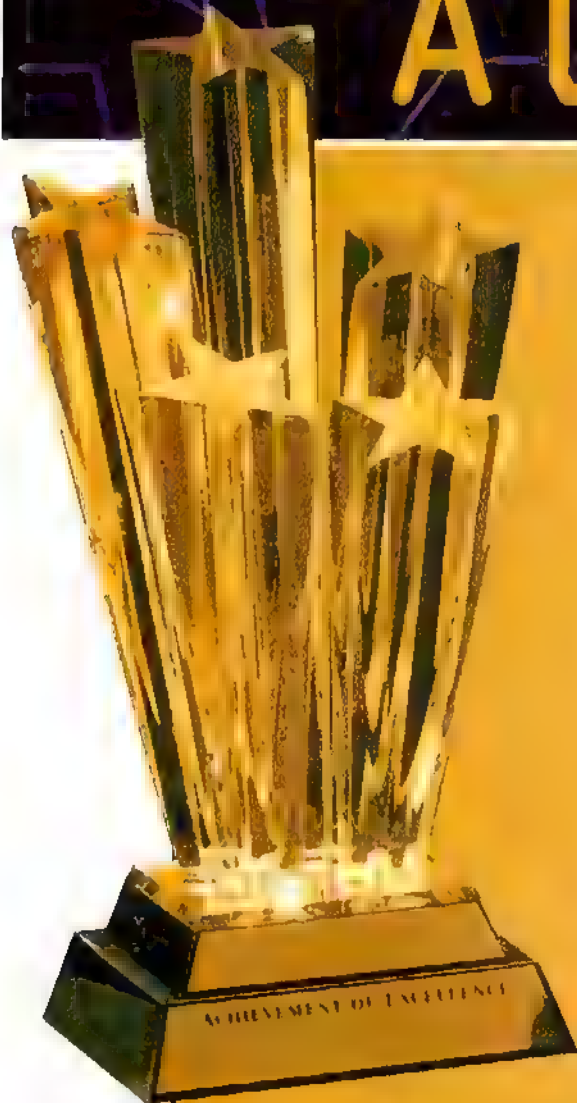
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## CGW Presents the Best Games of 1998

**E**ach year, the editors of *Computer Gaming World* check their rocket launchers and crossbows at the door and file somberly into our august conference room. This star chamber, our assemblage of jaded critics, busily debates the merits and potential demerits of the year's best games in each gaming genre, as well as the best game-related hardware, in order to determine the winners of the *CGW* Premier Awards.

Finalists are gleaned from those games that have scored highest with our readers in the Top 100, appeared the most times in "Playing Lately?" polls, sold well in the marketplace, been well received by our regular contributors, and caused our editors' girlfriends and spouses to become jealous of a computer game.

Next, the editors play as many of the finalists as possible. Primary consideration in determining the winners is based on the editorial panel's evaluation of a given game's advancement of the gaming experience; performance within game genre or hardware component standards; and quality of innovation, play balance, and aesthetic presentation. *CGW* bestows the Game of the Year award to that gaming experience which transcends genre boundaries and advances the entire state of the gaming art beyond other game considerations. And now, the winners....



## Buy CGW's 1999 "Premier Award- Game of the Year" And the winners are:

### ACTION



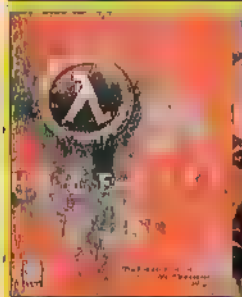
**BATTLEZONE** Combines realistic first person shooter action with full real-time strategic control in the midst of full blown 3D warfare. You fought in the "Cold War" of role space Command & Control over 30 units such as anti-grav tanks, walkers, guntowers, barracks & recyclers while fighting from inside your own vehicle in single or multi-player skirmishes.

**\$22.99**

Activision  
(Action)  
PC CD

• Heroic 2 \$39.99 • Thief \$29.99  
• Rainbow Six \$29.99 • Unreal \$29.99

### 'HALF LIFE' GAME OF THE YEAR!



**HALF LIFE** The military is just as interested in winning you, as they are in eradicating the alien menace. You must make a last ditch attempt to reach the alien world foil their monstrous schemes, and figure out how to make peace with your own murderous kind. It will take a fast trigger finger and a faster mind to survive, as not every monster is your enemy and not everything is as it seems.

**\$34.99**

Sierra  
(Action)  
PC CD

• Half-Life Hint Book \$10.99 • Half-Life Team Fortress Add-On \$24.99

### ROLEPLAYING



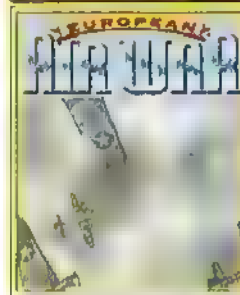
**BALDUR'S GATE** is a 24-hour forgotten Realms campaign world. It features a transparent interface and gameplay that uses a real-time modification of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons rules system. Over 60 monsters to fight, you control a party of six each with unique abilities and personas. CDs are filled with pre-rendered backgrounds, compelling music, and gameplay.

**\$39.99**

Interplay  
(Roleplaying)  
PC CD

• Fallout 2 \$29.99 • Might & Magic VI \$29.99  
• Final Fantasy VII \$32.99 • Return to Krondor \$34.99

### SIMULATION



**EUROPEAN AIR WAR** Take 20 WWII fighters from Great Britain, Germany & the U.S. Delend England from German bombers, escort B-17s to the Third Reich, or dogfight over France. Missions include up to 256 planes in the air simultaneously. Fight Swap Bomb Target Escort Flight. Features a 3D environment. Multiplayer via dogfights & co-op missions via modem & network.

**\$34.99**

(Simulation)  
PC CD

• Combat Flight Simulator \$48.99 • Falcon 4.0 \$49.99  
• F-22 Total Air War \$38.99 • WW2 Fighters \$44.99

### ADVENTURE- IT'S A TIE!



**\$20.99**

Dreamforge/ASC  
(Adventure) PC CD

**\$39.99**

LucasArts  
(Adventure) PC CD

• Blackstone Chronicles \$39.99 • Redguard \$49.99  
• King's Quest VIII \$34.99 • Quest For Glory V \$34.99

### SPACE SIMULATION



**INDEPENDENCE WAR** is the tale of an interstellar skirmish. Take command of a 180 meter ion Dreadnought class Corvette, equipped with a million and a half tons of kinetic light armor allows you 360 degrees of freedom in full 3D. Features numerous space weapons such as seek & destroy.

**\$30.99**

Info Games  
(Simulation)  
PC CD

• Descent: Freespace \$29.99 • Rogue Squadron \$49.99  
• X-Com Interceptor \$18.99 • Battlefront 3000 ver.2 \$17.99

### STRATEGY



**STARCRAFT** As the military leader for your species, you must gather your resources to gain either a fast-run or gobble down. Play 30 diverse missions in space, on planets, within installations. Control any of 3 species, each with unique attributes and abilities. Multiplayer games for up to 8 players over IPX networks and Battle.net. Scenario and map editor allows you to create your own campaigns.

**\$35.99**

Blizzard  
(Strategy)  
PC CD

• Populous: The Beginning \$45.99 • Warhammer 40,000 \$44.99  
• Railroad Tycoon \$44.99 • Gangsters \$29.99

### HARDWARE

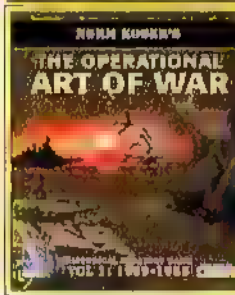


**DIAMOND MONSTER** MX300 PCI. Creates a realistic & immersive 3D sound environment. It truly rocks with full acceleration of ASX 2.0 Direct Sound3D. Direct Sound games, cinema-quality DVD, & even MP-3. Features studio-quality 320 voice DLS wavetable synthesizer. Supports up to 4 speakers. Powered by Aureal Vortex 2 PCI audio accelerator.

**\$88.99**

• Mouseman Mouse \$39.99 • Xtermator Gamepad \$43.99  
• Sound ForceFeedback Wheel \$169.99 • Y51 M2B Speakers \$79.99

### WAR



**THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR** It is volume covers all modern war from 1839 to 1950, including the war with Germany and Japan, the Korean War, and hypothetical battles. Game scenarios from company to corps level are 2.5 miles per hex to 25 miles per hex. Twelve major scenarios with stunning 16-bit graphics.

**\$29.99**

Talons  
(War)  
PC CD

• Aide-De-Camp 2 \$44.99 • West Front \$34.99  
• Great Battles of Julius Caesar \$24.99 • Peoples General \$29.99

### SPORTS



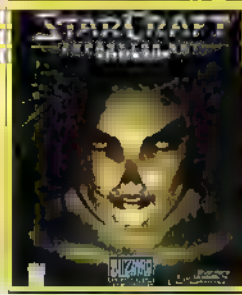
**FIFA ROAD TO WORLD CUP 98** GRAZY! HAVE CHANCES AND CHANCES! FIFA 98 is the game to qualify to World Cup 98. The long road to France starts in the qualifiers with 172 teams from six international zones vying for one of 30 positions in the final rounds. It's the largest sporting event of the century and it's up to you to qualify.

**\$19.99**

Electronic Arts  
(Sports)  
PC CD

• Links LS 99 \$39.99 • NHL 98 \$42.99  
• Madden 99 \$39.99 • FIFA Soccer 98 \$39.99

### ADD-ONS



**'STARCRAFT BROOD WAR'** is an expansion pack to StarCraft. It introduces the race of the Zerg, a new hero, the Zerg Pylon, and a new hero, the Zerg Pylon. It also introduces a new hero, the Zerg Pylon. It also introduces a new hero, the Zerg Pylon.

**\$24.99**

Blizzard  
(Strategy)  
PC CD

• Age of Empires: Rise of Rome \$29.99 • Total Annihilation Core Contingency \$19.99  
• Dying Hellfire \$19.99 • Duke II: Ground Zero \$24.99

### DRIVING



**NEED FOR SPEED 3** New car models, new tracks, new races. Need for Speed 3 is the most realistic driving game ever. It features a new car model, the Dodge Viper, and a new track, the Daytona International Speedway. It also features a new car model, the Dodge Viper, and a new track, the Daytona International Speedway.

**\$42.99**

Electronic Arts  
(Simulation)  
PC CD

• F1 Racing Simulation \$29.99 • Motorcycles Madness \$44.99  
• Grand Prix Legends \$29.99 • Moto Racer 2 \$39.99

Visa, MC & Discover accepted. Checks held 4 weeks. Money Orders under \$200 same as cash. COD \$8. Price, release, availability, shipping times & offer not guaranteed & are subject to change at any time. Hardware may require add'l S&H. Within 10 days defective repaired or replaced at our discretion. After 10 days the manufacturer's warranty applies. All sales final. S&H calculated on a per order, per shipment, and per item basis. This "per order" charge is charged once per order placed; the "per item" charge is charged once for each item ordered & the "per shipment" charge is charged once for each shipment we make to you. For each US order \$10.00 will be allocated to a 12 issue subscription to Computer Games Strategy Plus.

## ★★★★★ Game of the Year ★★★★★

## HALF-LIFE

**F**or the foreseeable future, every shooter released will have to face one tough question:

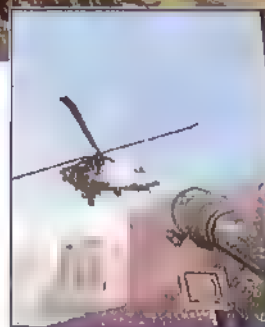
"How does it compare to HALF-LIFE?" Transcending and revolutionizing the first-person shooter, HALF-LIFE ranks without question as a landmark game, a milestone that in time will prove significant in the nascent history of gaming.

In retrospect, what HALF-LIFE accomplished seems so obvious it's a wonder no one did it before. It started with the story. Realizing the true potential of the first-person perspective, Valve made sure that every plot element happened to you. No distancing, third-person cut-scenes to shove the plot forward, in HALF-LIFE the characters around you spoke directly to you—and you could interact with them, getting them to help you, heal you, or join you. Beautifully paced, the developing story gripped you, engaged you emotionally, and kept you playing just so you could find out what would happen next.

HALF-LIFE's handling of boss monsters was simply a stroke of genius. Discarding the traditional model of tossing one huge, never-before-seen *über-beast* at you every few levels, this game



HALF-LIFE ranks without question as a landmark game, a milestone that in time will prove significant in the nascent history of gaming.



HALF-LIFE's houndeyes, alien slaves, or headcrabs—it would go to the Marines. Incredibly brutal and wickedly smart, the top-notch AI of these grunts was so well designed and challenging that if the game had no other enemies it still would have rocked.

Shimmering graphics, great puzzles, haunting 3D sound, and a multiplayer game that rivals QUAKE DeathMatching round out a very complete package. Rarely has there been a game as thrilling and enthralling as HALF-LIFE. Rarely has a game been more deserving of being named Game of the Year.

introduced most of its bosses early, right at the beginning of a sequence of levels. Forced to deal with the tentacled creature, Gonarch, or Gargantua, gamers grew truly to hate them. That kind of emotional investment elevated the killing of those bastards so much that destroying the damned "Surface Tension" Apache helicopter was gaming's best, most rewarding moment of the year.

Brilliant level design enhanced the experience immensely. Rooms were rarely packed with enemies; instead, monsters were strategically placed and could appear anywhere at any time, creating a pervasive sense of unease. Remarkably, the real-world settings only heightened that feeling of dread as the otherworldly invaders turned it on its head. After being steeped in reality for the majority of the game, the alien dimension of the final levels proved even more disorienting.

If CGW gave a Monster of the Year Award, it wouldn't go to





**EVIL, WICKED,  
MEAN AND NASTY.**





# A-10 WARTHOG

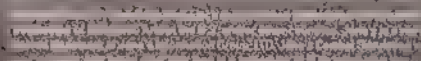
*From The Award Winning Creator  
Of Longbow, Longbow2 and F-15.*



Jane's A-10 Warthog takes you into the brutal world of frontline air combat! It's like piloting a flying tank! The A-10 encases your cockpit in a 4" thick titanium bathtub that acts like a bullet-proof helmet for your butt. So don't worry about getting hit... worry about turning enemy tanks into scrap metal! After all, you're armed with the most devastating ground attack weapon ever built: the Avenger Cannon. With a recoil that shakes the entire plane, this 30 mm, 7 barrel cannon turns titanium armour into tin foil. The A-10 is so devastating, Desert Storm pilots saw enemy commanders evacuate their tanks and run at the sight of it! Jane's A-10 Warthog is the meanest, nastiest flight sim we've ever made! Prepare to get down and dirty!



*"We Build Sims By The Book"*  
[www.janes.es.com](http://www.janes.es.com)





# THE BEST OF THE YEAR

## ★★★★★ Best Action ★★★★★

### BATTLEZONE

**W**hile our Game of the Year, HALF-LIFE, most redefined the action niche, all our finalists brought something new to table. RAINBOW SIX deftly mixed strategic planning with nail-biting action as it brought the world of counterterrorist operations to life. HERETIC II proved that the QUAKE II engine could work in a third-person game and that a spell-casting, shirtless elf could actually kick ass. Next to the revolutionary HALF-LIFE, THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT most shook up the shooter genre, replacing traditional run-'n'-gun gameplay with a brain-busting, tense, first-person game that emphasized stealth and



By excelling in every aspect of design gameplay, BATTLEZONE handily earned Action Game of the Year.

thinking over reflexes.

But it was Activision's action/strategy hybrid BATTLEZONE that really broke new ground. Taking place in an alternate past during which the Cold War was fought on distant planets, BATTLEZONE put gamers inside a missile-spitting hovortank and then let them harvest resources, build defenses, and (best of all) create hordes of other tanks to help battle those godless Commies. The graphics were drop-dead gorgeous, the multiplayer game was a blast, and the game sported a beautifully designed interface that made commanding your forces an intuitive breeze.

By excelling in every aspect of design gameplay, BATTLEZONE handily earned Action Game of the Year recognition.

Runner-up: Thief: The Dark Project, Eidos Interactive. Other Action Finalists: Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six, Red Storm Entertainment; Heretic II, Activision

## ★★★★★ Tie: Best Adventure ★★★★★

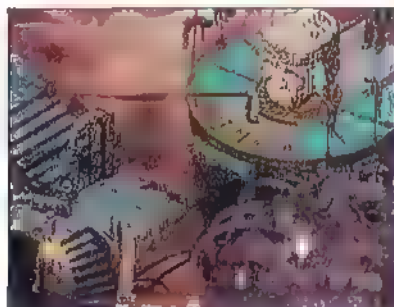
### SANITARIUM

**A**dventure games continued their remarkable renaissance in 1998 with a number of stellar releases. Two in particular stood out in our minds, and we liked them both so much that we ultimately did not have the heart to pick one over the other. So this year's Adventure Game of the Year is a tie.

SANITARIUM, from tiny DreamForge Entertainment, came from out of nowhere to provide the creepiest, most compelling, and

best-told story of the year, bar none. Starting from an utter cliché of a plot line—you wake up and you don't know who or where you are—SANITARIUM builds in intensity until you simply cannot stop playing.

Filled with moments that are both terrifying and moving, SANITARIUM gets under your skin like few games ever have.



original masterpiece, combining first-rate storytelling, unforgettable 3D graphics, and the biting humor for which LucasArts adventures are so well known. In an industry

### GRIM FANDANGO

**F**or the second year in a row, following THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND, LucasArts has struck gold in the adventure game genre. GRIM FANDANGO, however, is more than just another adventure game. It's a ground-breaking, utterly

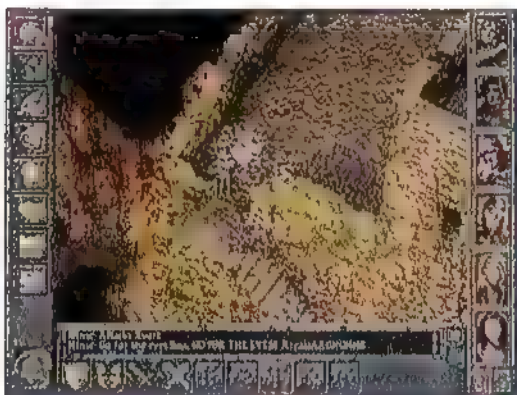
overloaded with brain-dead copycat games, GRIM FANDANGO positively bursts with creative energy, melding Mexican Day of the Dead folklore with '50s film noir. Manny Calavera may be just another dead guy, but in LucasArts' able hands, the story of *this* dead guy was one of the gaming highlights of this or any other year.

Other Adventure Finalists: Redguard, Bethesda; King's Quest VIII: Mask of Eternity, Sierra Studios; Blackstone Chronicles, Legend/Red Orb

## ★ Best RPG ★

### BALDUR'S GATE

**T**he *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* license could well have been named "Most Abused License of All Time" prior to this year. There really hasn't been an AD&D-licensed product that added to the gaming experience since the oldSSI "gold box" games. Then along came BALDUR'S GATE. Interplay promised us that its developer, Bioware, would be faithful to the spirit of AD&D while providing an up-to-date, technologically advanced engine. We were, to say the least, skeptical.



We've never seen character alignment and character attributes handled as well as they are in BALDUR'S GATE.

We are skeptical no more. From character creation through character interaction and on to party management and combat, BALDUR'S GATE is an exceptional product. We've never seen character alignment and character attributes handled as well as they are in BG. Put characters of opposite alignments in the same party and you're asking for internecline warfare. Put a character with high charisma in the lead and you're likely to get optimal discounts from the local merchants and more information than you'd expect from nonplayer characters. Bioware must be commended for the detailed character sketches behind each character.

The runner-up, New World Computing's MIGHT AND MAGIC VI, was a gigantic, addictive hack-'n'-slash—and not much in the depth department. Still, for 80 hours or so, it was a definite hoot to play.

Runner-up: *Might and Magic VI*, New World Computing. Other Role-Playing Finalists: *Fallout 2*, Black Isle/Interplay; *Return to Krondor*, Sierra Studios; *Final Fantasy VII*, SquareSoft/Eidos Interactive.





## ★★★★★ Best Simulation ★★★★★

### EUROPEAN AIR WAR

**D**espite its troubled development history and competition from flashier sims, MicroProse's EUROPEAN AIR WAR walks away with the

feel as if we really were defending English shores during the Battle of Britain, and to manage huge formations of aircraft in dazzling aerial ballets, kept us coming back to this sim more than any other. When

About all that was missing were G-forces and a picture of Betty Grable taped to the instrument panel.

Premier Award for best simulation game. This World War II simulation captured the feeling of being in a living, unpredictable combat environment better than any other sim released this past year. The dynamic campaign's ability to pull us in and make us

you dived through a formation of smoking B-17s while chasing an Me-109, about all that was missing were G-forces and a picture of Betty Grable taped to the instrument panel.

Jane's WWII FIGHTERS was a very, very close runner-up.



Unmatched aircraft graphics, amazing special effects, top-notch AI, and accurate flight modeling really pulled you into the combat experience. Multiplayer on Jane's Combat.net is a blast, with both dogfights and full missions available.

However, the scripted feel of many of the Jane's missions gave EUROPEAN AIR WAR the edge.

Special mention goes to FALCON 4.0, a sim with unprecedented detail, which would have been a shoo-in had it not shipped loaded with bugs.

Runner-up: WWII Fighters, Jane's Combat Simulations. Other Finalists: Combat Flight Simulator, Microsoft; F-15, Jane's; F22 Total Air War, DID; Falcon 4.0, MicroProse

## ★★★★★ Best Space Sim ★★★★★



### INDEPENDENCE WAR

**I**n a genre in which Hollywood-style glitz is all too often the focus, it took physics to make a standout title. Past space sims have played out more like WWII dogfights,

with attempts at realism often sacrificed for gameplay (Physics aren't totally new to space sims, but while Virgin's SHUTTLE was impressive, the realism didn't exactly make for fast-paced action.) Now UK-based developer Particle Systems has proved

INDEPENDENCE WAR proves that you can have realistic space physics and great gameplay.

that you can have realistic space physics and great gameplay.

It's not just the physics that make Infogrames' INDEPENDENCE WAR the best space sim this year; there's also great mission design behind it. Rather than the "fly to a waypoint and kill everything there" missions found in other games, INDEPENDENCE WAR gives you tasks such as neutralizing an antimatter bomb or using a remote-controlled freighter to destroy a space station. While the intership battles do sometimes become turn-and-shoot fights,

there's often an element of naval warfare to them as well. And the software graphics engine—the best we've ever seen—was bolstered by superb 3Dfx enhancement in the U.S. release.

DESCENT: FREESPACE also proved to be an excellent game, featuring some of the best wingman AI to hit the genre, but it was too derivative of previous space sims. The more original INDEPENDENCE WAR, in light of its innovative design and great gameplay, clearly led the field and earned the award.

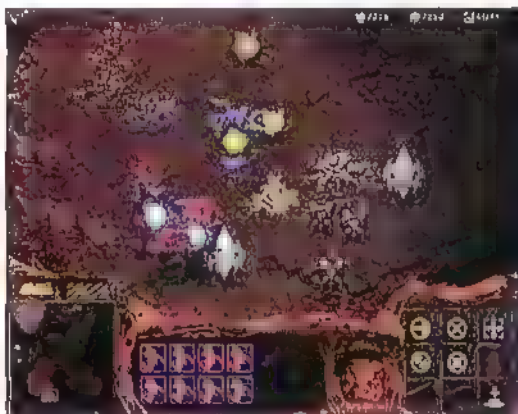
Runner-up: Descent: Freespace, Interplay

## ★ Best Strategy ★

### STARCRAFT

Apparently God takes great pride in creating irony. How else to explain that in one of the weakest years for strategy gaming in recent memory, the best real-time strategy game in memory—recent or otherwise—is released?

You had to look hard amongst the herd of limp WAR-CRAFT and C&C clones to find many strategy games of worth. In 1998, POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING reinvented the



A paragon of design and balance, STARCRAFT is the touchstone of its genre.

God game genre (a genre that the POPULOUS series created years ago) with wit, a stunning 3D engine, and a truly unique multiplayer game. CHAOS GATE was perhaps the best iteration of the WarHammer universe to date, although some weak AI hampered its turn-based squad-level combat, while RAILROAD TYCOON II proved to be a brilliant update of a gaming classic.

But Blizzard's STARCRAFT stood head and shoulders above them all. This game had everything and executed it ingeniously. Three truly unique races with three truly unique unit sets, creating a gameworld of seemingly endless strategic depth. A compelling story artfully told through cut-scenes, mission briefings, and the missions themselves. And multiplayer action (free on Blizzard's battle.net) that was insidiously addicting and simply unparalleled. A paragon of design and balance, STARCRAFT is the touchstone of its genre, the definitive game against which all real-time games will be measured for years to come.

Runner-up: Populous: The Beginning, Bullfrog.

Other Strategy Finalists: Railroad Tycoon II, Gathering of Developers, WarHammer 40,000: Chaos Gate,SSI.





## THE BEST OF THE YEAR

## ★★★★★ Best Sports ★★★★★

## FIFA

For North Americans, soccer fails to maintain the excitement level of a Michael Jordan jump shot at the buzzer or a Joe Montana-engineered touchdown drive in the

debates—and gamepad face-offs—over whether France could once again beat Brazil (they couldn't), why the English were so slow (it's the food), and whether the current USA team might stand a chance against

support, engrossing solo campaigns, excellent multiplayer, and the toughest AI this side of Deep Blue. How appropriate in a World Cup year that EA Sports finally did not one, but *three* games

that were superior not only to their excellent console counterparts but also to the other worthy PC contenders in a great year for computer sports games. *Gooooaaal!!!!!!!* indeed.

FIFA wasn't just one game, it was a trilogy of the best games covering any sport—ever.

last minute of the Super Bowl. So it is a tribute to the superb design of EA Sports' FIFA that it held us enraptured in World Cup campaigns for months after other sports had faded from our hard drives. We had passionate

Germany (are you kidding?).

Best of all, FIFA wasn't just one game, it was a trilogy of the best games covering any sport—ever. FIFA: ROAD TO THE WORLD CUP, WORLD CUP 98, and FIFA 99 all had wonderful 3D graphic



Runner-up: NHL Hockey 99, EA Sports

Other Sports Game Finalists: Madden 99, EA Sports; Front Office Football, Solecismic Software; Links LS 99, Access Software

## ★★★★★ Best Driving ★★★★★

## NEED FOR SPEED III: HOT PURSUIT

Let's make this clear: NEED FOR SPEED III: HOT PURSUIT wasn't the most

realistic driving game of the year. We know this. We know that taking a turn at 120 miles an hour

and crashing into a wall would probably kill you in real life. But you know what? We don't care. No driving game released in

1998 came close to matching the sheer visceral thrills of Electronic Arts' utterly addicting arcade driving game, in both its single- and multiplayer forms. The game's Hot Pursuit mode, in which you can either play a cop or be pursued by one, was one of our favorite brain-dead guilty pleasures of the year. It didn't hurt that NFSIII featured gorgeous 3D graphics and the best implementation of force-feedback to

date. No racing game in 1998 was more fun to play. And sometimes, you know, that's what it's all about.

At the exact opposite end of the spectrum, ironically, we have our runner-up: Sierra Sports' GRAND PRIX LEGENDS. Arguably the most ambitious and realistic driving simulation to date—modeling the thrills and difficulties of Grand Prix racing circa 1967—it is also perhaps the toughest to play. It's an awesome game for those who can handle it.

In a less competitive year, Ubi Soft's excellent F1 RACING SIMULATION would have won hands down. The sequel, just released, may fare better in '99.



Runner-up: Grand Prix Legends, Sierra Sports

Other Driving Finalists: Motocross Madness, Microsoft; F1 Racing Simulation, UbiSoft; Moto Racer 2, Electronic Arts

## ★ Best War ★

### THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR

**E**very time we think we might have TalonSoft figured out, the company surprises us again. After all, almost anything that follows the award-winning



BATTLEGROUND series risks failing to meet high expectations. Now that THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR has brought us back again and again for endless campaigning, why we ever worried...we'll never know. Combining the best elements of a turn-based format with a number of clever subsystems, the game re-creates 20th-century warfare like no other. What boardgame, for instance, could ever calculate more than 90 different modifiers for each combat, much less keep the pace fairly lively? What other computer game comes

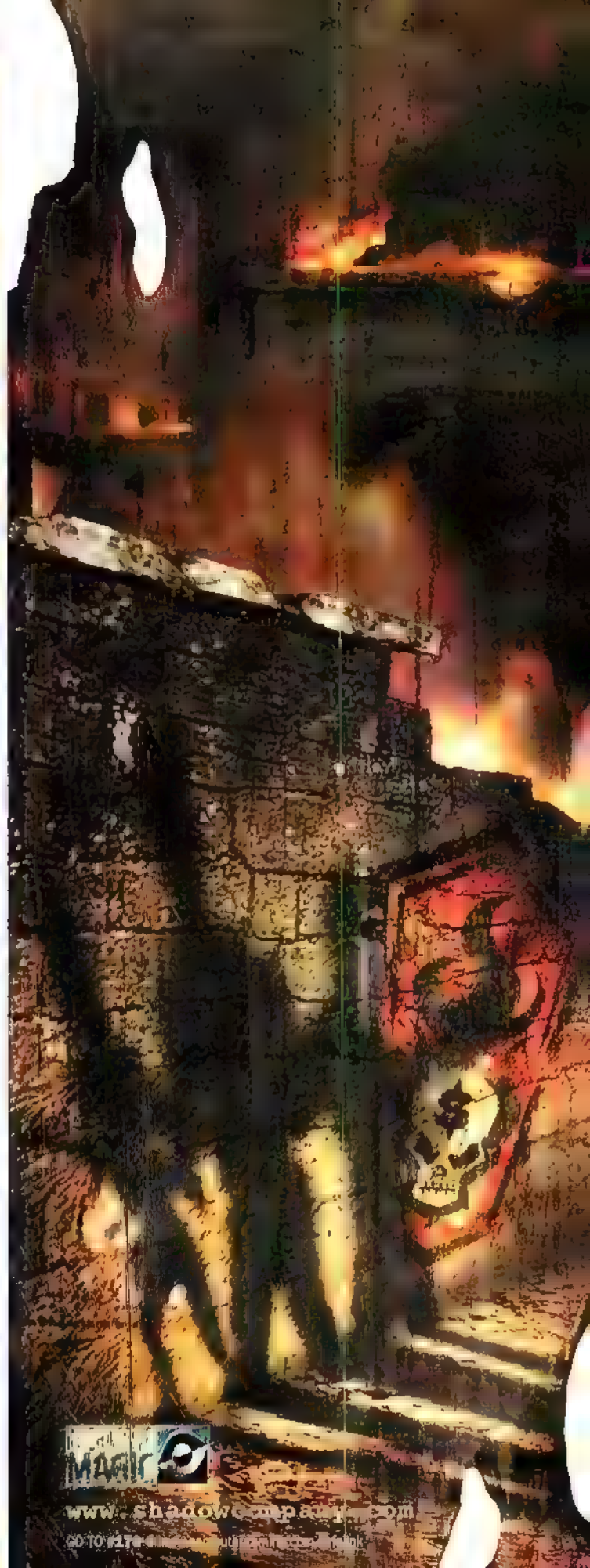
**THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR**  
shows that there is  
still plenty of life  
left in serious wargames.

close to offering such a demanding—and ruthlessly unforgiving—silicon opponent, plus the ability to wage war versus a human armchair general?

Not even STEEL PANTHERS so vividly puts you in the mindset of a modern-era operational-level commander. Not only do you deal with logistics, battlefield morale, and a variety of mission types in ART OF WAR, you must also develop your instincts, rather than your ability to gain a three-to-one odds attack. With its innovative combination of time, movement, and combat action, THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR shows that there is still plenty of life left in serious wargames.

Julius Caesar gets his due in the last of Interactive Magic's GREAT BATTLES series. With improved graphics, aggressive AI, a solid campaign, and an excellent scenario editor, it's the best ancients game in more than a decade for the PC

Runner-up: Great Battles of Julius Caesar, Interactive Magic  
Other Wargame Finalists: Aide de Camp 2, HPS Simulations;  
West Front, TalonSoft



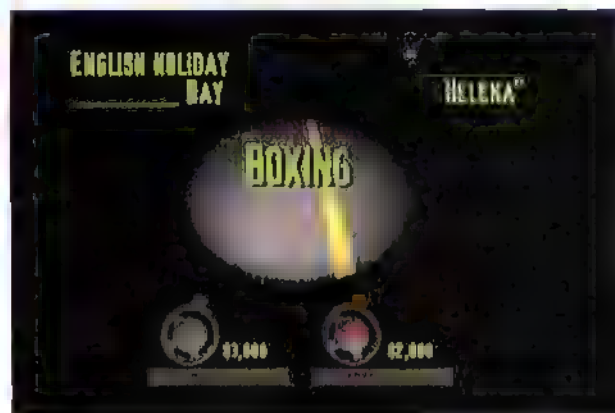
[www.shadowcompany.com](http://www.shadowcompany.com)

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## THE BEST OF THE YEAR

## ★★★★★ Best Classic ★★★★★



## YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: THE RIDE

Even though we've found something to enjoy in nearly every edition of this ribald trivia game series, Berkeley Systems' latest JACK struck us as

something special. The jokes kept their saucy edge, but with less of the mean-spirited humor that had crept into recent games in the series. New and improved games

within the game—such as *Dis or Dat*—added enough freshness to the mix that even jaded old gamers couldn't suppress a smirk. Sure, the salacious play-by-play occasionally goes a bit too much over the top, but it's hard to fault a game that so revels in its own

really do know JACK, at least where our funny bones are concerned.

Our runner-up, JEWELS II, does not always live up to its subtitle. THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE. But it's a great design that lets you change the difficulty of each of

It's hard to fault a game that so revels in its own irreverence.

Irreverence. YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: THE RIDE ranks easily as the best since the first of the series found its way into the CGW Hall of Fame. And for that we salute the folks at Berkeley Systems and Jellyvision, game designers who

the puzzles—or their multiple variations—on the fly. If it isn't quite up to the level of JACK: THE RIDE, JEWELS II is still well worth the time for anyone who enjoys challenging puzzles wrapped up in a simple, enjoyable package.

Runner-up: Jewels II, Hoffman and Associates

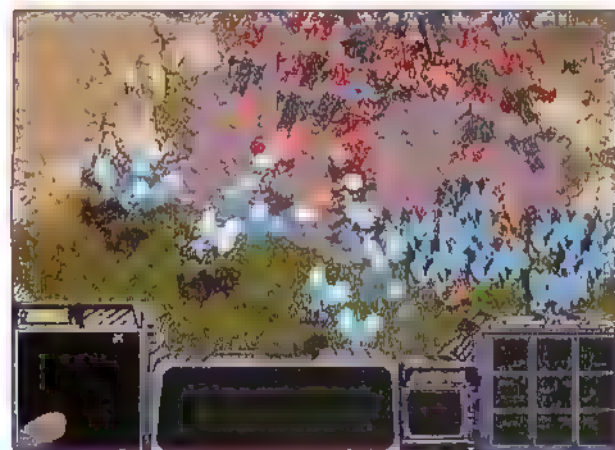
Other Classics/Puzzle Finalists: Mega Solitaire, Palladium Interactive; Smart Games Challenge 3; Smart Games/Hasbro

## ★★★★★ Best Add-on ★★★★★

## STARCRAFT: BROOD WAR

How do you follow up the best strategy game of the year? You make an expansion disc that fine-tunes

the game balance while it also serves up a darker and superior plot. That is exactly what Blizzard did with STARCRAFT: BROOD WAR.



BROOD WAR surpasses the original in terms of story, a feature that wasn't lacking in the first place.

No other add-on released in 1998 so significantly perfected and enhanced the original game as much as BROOD WAR did.

Some gamers might scoff at BROOD WAR adding "only" six all-new units, but those six units are an example of quality versus quantity, and they do much to tweak the game balance. The Zerg now have a defensive measure, the Terrans have medical support, the Protoss have powerful new spells, and all three races gain better air-to-air support.

Also, BROOD WAR adds three new tile sets (with their own unique critters) and a host of new multiplayer maps.

Finally, BROOD WAR surpasses the original STARCRAFT in terms of story, a feature that wasn't lacking in the first place. This time, the 26-mission campaign presents a plot that is much darker in tone, complete with heroes you love and hate from STARCRAFT and a few fresh faces. BROOD WAR makes the best strategy game yet even better.

Other Add-On Finalists: Age of Empires: The Rise of Rome, Microsoft; Diablo: Hellfire, Sierra On-Line; Total Annihilation: The Core Contingency, Cavedog

## ★★★★★ Best Hardware ★★★★★

## AUREAL VORTEX 2 &amp; DIAMOND MX300

The past year proved to be a very good one for PC gaming hardware. 3D graphics got prettier and faster. Force-feedback finally arrived on the scene in full, um, force. Memory and CPUs got cheap. And PC audio grew a third dimension.

For this year's Hardware Product of the Year, we thought seriously about nVidia's venerable RIVA TNT, the first 2D/3D chipset to outgun a single Voodoo<sup>2</sup>. But we've given awards to 3D graphics chipsets for the past several years; we decided it was time for a change.

So this year, the award goes to Aureal Semiconductor's Vortex 2 audio chipset and Diamond Multimedia's MonsterSound MX300. Aureal first brought convincing 3D audio to the PC market and helped move audio to the PCI bus two years ago with its Vortex chipset and

its A3D API to make 3D audio programming easier for developers. The Vortex 2 chipset adds more rendering horsepower, as well as rendering features like occlusion and reflection. Games like JEDI KNIGHT and, more recently, HALF-LIFE and THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT have shown what a difference good 3D audio can make in a game.

Diamond Multimedia has been an Aureal champion, and Diamond's marketing muscle helped make Aureal a household name for PC gamers.

This year's runner-up is Microsoft's SideWinder Force-Feedback Wheel: It was the best force-feedback wheel released in 1998 and, along with titles like EA's NEED FOR SPEED II, helped force-feedback find a home in PC gaming.



Games like JEDI KNIGHT and, more recently, HALF-LIFE and THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT have shown what a difference good 3D audio can make in a game.

Runner-up: SideWinder Force-Feedback Wheel, Microsoft

## ★ Special Award: Hardware Development ★

## NVIDIA

The nVidia story can be summed up in a single word: redemption. This graphics chip-maker entered the PC industry on a sour note four years ago with its ill-fated NV-1 multimedia processor, which aspired to be a Ginsu, cutting through all kinds of media, but wound up as table scraps. Undaunted by the setback, nVidia, then a privately funded company, knew it had one more shot at success in this brutally competitive



market. So nVidia aimed squarely to accelerate Direct3D, and later OpenGL, and decided to forgo a proprietary API. The company scored. And it scored big with the RIVA 128, proving that a card that accelerated only standard APIs well could thrive. More recently, nVidia unleashed the RIVA TNT, the first 2D/3D board to challenge the supremacy of the mighty Voodoo<sup>2</sup>. With its latest, the TNT2, nVidia will remain a tough competitor throughout this year.



## ★★★ Special Award: Musical Score ★★★

### WWII FIGHTERS

**D**on Veca and the sound team at Jane's Combat Simulations deserve special recognition for creating a flight sim in which you *don't* want to immediately disable the music in flight. In fact, you may end up spending time exploring the sim's virtual museum just to listen to the superb recordings of big band music.

Once you're in the air, the orchestral soundtrack follows your actions like a movie soundtrack. Break from the pack and head off into the sunset doing aerobatics and you'll get inspirational, uplifting melodies. Hit a patch of flak that starts to send your buddies dropping to the ground in flames, and the score will respond with a dark, foreboding passage. Head home after a successful mission and you'll hear patriotic tunes that will make you proud that you've played your part in the world's last "good" war.



## ★★★ Special Award: Quick-Fix Gaming ★★★



### BIG RACE U.S.A.

**S**ome things are best enjoyed in small doses—fine brandies, a child's unconditional love, the commemorative boxed set of Wilson Phillips recordings featuring their ground-breaking work with Tom Waits. Just a brief taste of these things is enough. In the past year, the best, quickest way to slap a smile on your face was Empire's BIG RACE U.S.A.

Absolutely ideal for those 10-minute spurts of the workday when your boss wasn't looking, BIG RACE U.S.A. provided a delicious, retro gaming experience second to none while it set a new standard in PC pinball. With incredible physics, a host of tweakable options, and gameplay that was a perfect blend of reward and challenge, BIG RACE U.S.A. also proved so incredibly addictive it might as well have shipped with a set of cranial meat hooks.

## ★★★★★ Coaster of the Year ★★★★★

### TRESPASSER

If this truly is "the evolution of first-person 3D gaming," then get ready to start carbon-dating the genre, because **TRESPASSER** was extinct upon arrival. Promising to deliver both action and adventure elements, this game utterly failed to provide either, degenerating into a crate-stacking simulation that barely worked, due to a monumentally cumbersome interface and a physics-based engine that slapped down the slightest hint of fun. Idiotic voiceovers, pogo-ing stegosauruses, maddening collision detection, movement that redefined "crawling frame-rate," dinosaurs that periodically freeze

**TRESPASSER** earns its spot under a big, sloppy mug of General Foods International Coffee.

in their tracks, guns that absolutely refuse to pass through doorways—there isn't space enough in most phone books to list every gaffe in this game. For foisting this sorry programming exercise on an unsuspecting public, certain to be lured in by its killer license, **TRESPASSER** earns its spot under a big, sloppy mug of General Foods International Coffee.



## ★★★★★ Coaster Runners-Up ★★★★★

### ACTION> EXTREME PAINTBRAWL

Single-handedly redefining "crap" conceptually, **EXTREME PAINTBRAWL**



**PAINTBRAWL** looked ugly, played ugly, had hideous AI, and couldn't get a network game up and running.

### ADVENTURE> BEYOND TIME

**BEYOND TIME** wanted to be **MYST** really, really bad—and got

it about half right: It's really, really bad.

### SPORTS> FOX SPORTS SOCCER '99

Just what the world needed: an unrealistic, impossible-to-



control, buggy, ugly soccer game. This game wasn't even as good as **FOX SPORTS GOLF**.

### STRATEGY/WAR DOMINION

Ion Storm's initial release

sailed like a lead balloon, complete with overhyped and ineffectual AI, 1995-era graphics, and



a back-story so bad that it had us wondering why we even briefly stopped playing **STARCRRAFT** for this.

### SIM/SPACE SIM> iPANZER '44

This wasn't so much a simulation of a WWII tank as it was of a WWII simulation tanking. Buggy, unattractive, and sporting impressively obtuse AI.



### CLASSICS/PUZZLE> CAESAR'S PALACE SLOTS

Interplay has some decent gambling sims to its credit, but this is one of the worst ideas we've ever seen for a computer game. What's next—Lotto of the 50 States?





"So I throw



this 2 o'clock hitter<sup>1</sup> a

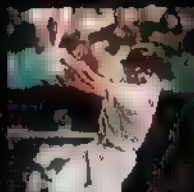
over my leather man's



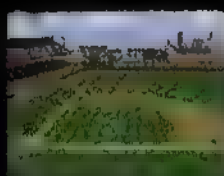
pancake.

morning journal<sup>6</sup> off at the handle

Hook<sup>7</sup>



decides he's going with



deuce<sup>10</sup> - even though I'd collared<sup>11</sup>

Guess<sup>13</sup> don't give



him any black,<sup>14</sup>

and we lose

Don't pull a Merkle<sup>15</sup> Hit our website:  
[www.highheat.com](http://www.highheat.com)



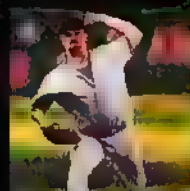
(1) a player that hits well in batting practice, but poorly during games. (2) a pitch with nothing on it. (3) an extremely weak hit. (4) a hit eluding the best infielder's tiny glove. (5) a pushover hitter. (6) a bat made with poor wood. (7) a reference to the sultry pop singer's signature 80's song "Is That All There Is?" (i.e., is that all there is to this pitch? (see nuptial)). (8) a manager with a tendency to pull a pitcher at the first sign of trouble. (9) the most physically unattractive player on any ball club. (10) a first-year player with a good curveball. (11) kept him from reaching base safely. (12) a player who rarely makes solid contact. (13) the umpire. (14) corners of home plate. (15) a base-on-balls or a walk. (16) a bone head play.

nudist and he fists a



cripple<sup>3</sup> right

Damn! I'd snapped that cousin's<sup>5</sup>



with a Peggy Lee!<sup>7</sup>

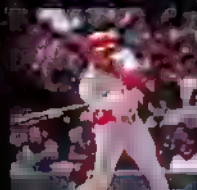


Well Captain



the ugly head<sup>9</sup> rook' with the

the banjo<sup>12</sup> on deck! Of course,



Mr.

so the rook' issues the Annie Oakley<sup>15</sup>

the ballgame."



(Sure you can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk?)

# HIGH HEAT Baseball™ 2000

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3DO™



Nocturne • Vampire The Masquerade: Redemption



# The Horror, The Horror



# Werewolf: The Apocalypse—Heart of the Gaia

**I**t begins in childhood. Monsters under the bed, dragons, "bad guys," Brussels sprouts. We like to be scared. Why? We don't know. CGW is not a pop psychology magazine. We do know, however, that (for whatever reason) horror continues to be one of the most popular genres of entertainment—as the millions of fans of the *Scream* movies, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Stephen King and Anne Rice books, and other creepy-crawly pastimes will testify.

Horror is invading computer games in a big way in 1999—and, no, we're not talking about a *BATTLECRUISER 3000 A.D.* sequel. CGW skulked out into the night to get the lowdown on three horror titles from three red-hot developers: *VAMPIRE THE MASQUERADE: REDEMPTION*, from Nihilistic Software; *WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE—HEART OF THE GAIA*, from Dreamforge Entertainment; and *NOCTURNE*, from Terminal Reality.

Do not say we didn't warn you.

Children and the faint of heart may want to skip ahead to the hardware reviews. This might be the most frightening feature we've ever written. So grab your pitchforks and torches, friends, and turn the page, if you dare. Bwah-hah-hah-hah-hah-hah-hah!!

(Okay, was that scary?)

photo: Robert Houser



# Vampire The Masquerade: Redemption

From the Creators of JEDI KNIGHT Comes a  
Bleeding-edge RPG

by Jeff Green

In a humble, nondescript, darkly lit office in Marin, California, a small group of game designers are creating a horde of undead, blood-sucking ghouls. Do not be alarmed. Do not alert the authorities. When they emerge from their dark domain, work completed, they will have something for you that will make you very, very happy.

Nihilistic Software, a startup company formed by a group of veteran designers from LucasArts and Rogue Entertainment (among other companies), are cooking up a deliciously frightening action/RPG that, when not dazzling you with its graphic and technological beauty, is going to scare the pants off you, rattle your emotions, and keep you coming back for more.

The game is called **VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE—REDEMPTION**, and it's based on the popular pen-

and-paper RPG from White Wolf Publishing. Using the rich backdrop of White Wolf's universe (see "Doggy Style" sidebar page 125), Nihilistic is fashioning an epic RPG, spanning 800 years and two continents, to tell the tale of a doomed, spiritually empty man who becomes a vampire and then learns, as a vampire, what it means to be

redeemed. Sound heavy? It is. But don't plan on being bored—not by a long shot. Those fangs in your mouth are not going to be used for opening cans.

## First Blood

As portrayed in White Wolf's universe (which has encompassed more than 50 game books), vampires are indeed the immortal undead who live off the blood of humans—but it's much more complicated than that. In the role-playing game, you play the role of a vampire, and it's up to you to decide how to accept your fate, how to live for eternity—and to question whether there is a need for notions of "good" and "evil," even amongst monsters.

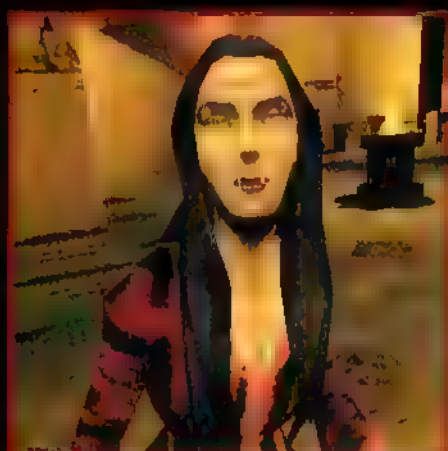
As Ray Gresko, REDEMPTION's project leader (and Nihilistic's CEO), put it: "White Wolf brought to the vampire universe something more mature, developed, and hard-core. These aren't mindless monsters; they're beings trying to hang on to their humanity, or who are desperately losing control of themselves to the beast—it's a constant struggle."

Along with the internal torment, there's also a constant external struggle. Without getting into it too deeply (that would require an entire issue of CGW), vampires trace their origin back to the original vampire, Cain, who, in ages past, spawned 13 "grandchilder" vampires. These 13 became known as the Antediluvians, from which descended the 13 clans of vampires in existence today. You might think that all vampires might get along, since they have that blood-sucking thing in common, but, according to White Wolf, you'd be wrong. Actually, the clans have been involved in a bitter, vicious "Jihad" for centuries, warring amongst themselves, forming political alliances, and espousing various ethical codes in a struggle for supremacy.

It's serious stuff, and a far cry from the "I want to suck your blood" kitschiness of old vampire movies. As fans of the RPG themselves, Nihilistic is hoping to capture White Wolf's epic, adult tone in its computer game.

"What we're trying to do," said Gresko, "is let the players feel what it's like to go through the traumatic experience of the Embrace [the experience of being bitten and reborn as a vampire] and losing your life as you know it—and now find yourself in this world of intrigue, where you're just a pawn in a giant power struggle."

Or, as he put it a bit later: "This ain't your daddy's Dracula."



**SINGLE WHITE VAMPIRE SEEKS SOULMATE**  
Meet the fetching young Serena, a member of the Cappadecian clan of vampires in 12th century Prague. Lucky for you, she's on your side.

Genre: RPG  
Publisher: Activision  
Developer: Nihilistic Software  
Release Date: Q4 '99  
www.nihilistic.com

## Up to My Neck in You

REDEMPTION's story (which hard-core fans will be thrilled to know was developed with White Wolf's direct input and was co-written by longtime *Vampire* writer Daniel Greenberg) begins in 12th Century Prague. You play the role of Christof Romauld, a holy knight employed by the Church as a vampire killer who, in the game's beginning, is "embraced" by a vampire, thus becoming the very thing he despises most. As he grapples with his spiritual anguish, he also finds himself caught up in an immense struggle between warring vampire clans. This forms the core concern of the game: Can Christof transcend his despair to help the forces of the "good" vampires, or will he just succumb to the beast within? And how does one be good, when you're forced to live off the blood of humans?

The game's levels are divided into four "hubs" and two acts. The first act is set in the Dark Ages and includes the Prague scenes, followed by a shift to Vienna. Nihilistic's designers and artists poured over reference books and history books to capture the look and feel of those cities, as well as to reference the religious and political events and attitudes of the era. Concept art of the architecture, done by the legendary Peter Chan (who worked on *DAY OF THE TENTACLE*, *JEDI KNIGHT*, *GRIM FANDANGO*—and, most recently, the *Star Wars: Episode I* film) revealed what Nihilistic is after here: historically faithful settings, but ones with a dark, macabre, almost organically alive quality. Buoyed by a dark orchestral score, the game's first half will have a distinctly gothic feel.

Halfway through the game, however, Christof—and the player—are in for a seriously rude awakening. Christof falls into a vampiric torpor for about 100 years and wakes up in modern-day London. This is the locale of the game's third hub, followed by the climax in New York City. Now, in addition to all your other problems—still raging on in the immortal world of the vampires—you have to learn how this new world works, and how you fit into it. In this modern world, you have to deal with punk-rock vampires and Mafiosi-style vampire gangs.





# ★★★★ "A stunning return to

94% "without a doubt the best interactive story of the year"

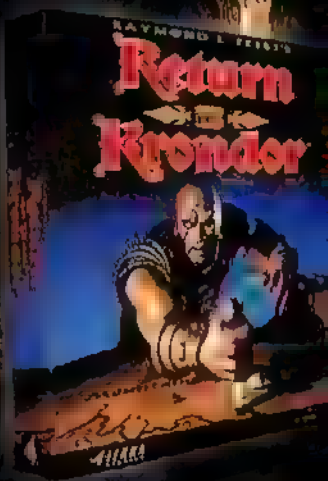
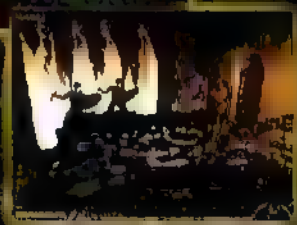
-GameOver

94% "sets a new standard for PC role-playing games"

-Antagonist Games Network

★★★★ "a well written story of intrigue and dark magic"

-GameCenter



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vampires. Now, Medieval Boy, you need to learn how a firearm works.

### If You Want Blood (You've Got It)

Although the storyline is complex and mature, Nihilistic is going to great pains to make sure that **REDEMPTION** is fun to play and great to look at. The programming team, all veterans of LucasArts' **JEDI KNIGHT**, have built a brand new graphics engine from the ground up. The team told me that they very briefly considered the notion of licensing an existing engine, but quickly realized it would be much simpler to build their own. Based on what we've seen so far, and the speed in which they created it, it looks like it was absolutely the right call.

The game is being built for 3D acceleration, and will be optimized for Direct3D, OpenGL, and Glide. As seems to be the trend these days, the game will mostly be played from a third-person perspective, but players will be able to hit the Alt key to look around in 1st person at any time. The engine features all the current FPS buzzwords we like to see—16-bit textures, specular lighting, volumetric fog—but it is how these technologies are being applied by the design team that gives this game such a unique look. The soft-skinned skeletal models (which you can see well in the screenshot of the Nosferatu vampires) provides a nice example of what Nihilistic is striving for: amazing, creepy detail. Each of the game's hubs will have not only a different architectural look and tone for both indoor and outdoor settings, but will also have different atmospheric effects. The Vienna hub, for example, takes place in the winter, so you might find that snow slows you down or affects your fighting abilities.

Because Nihilistic got the basic engine up and running so fast, the team can now spend the bulk of their development time perfecting the RPG system and game play. The goal here was to "have the best of both worlds," as Gresko put it—a robust, party-based RPG system that would also provide the same kind of



**PARTY OF FOUR** As the game progresses, you'll eventually gather a party of companions. You're the sullen guy second from the right. The others are, from left, Wilhelm Streicher, your mentor and friend; Erik McDoneugh, a Celtic, animal-like vampire of the Gangrel clan; and Sarana, your garden variety, pale moth-chick vampire.



**YO, TEXTURE-MAP THIS VAMPIRE** Vampire's stunning architectural design is based on tons of historical research by the Nihilistic design team.

bone-simple, visceral excitement of a game like **DIABLO**.

### Back in Black

At the early stage in which I saw the game, it looks like they're on their way. You start the game alone, but as you progress, you'll eventually have a party of four characters. Control will remain a single-player paradigm, but you'll be able to switch amongst members with a mouse click. In combat, which is all real-time, you'll be able to issue group commands (such as follow me, search-and-destroy, stay put) and let the party members' AI work autonomously. To ease your way into party control, you'll pick up members one at a time, to keep the learning curve a gradual one.

The game's interface is going to be completely mouse-driven and context-sensitive. As in **DIABLO**, clicking on a door is simply going to open or close it—you won't have to memorize a separate "open door" hot-key. The same will go for manipulating inventory items, weaponry, and in-game puzzle elements.

Character management is largely faithful to the White Wolf model, with about 10 physical and mental attributes

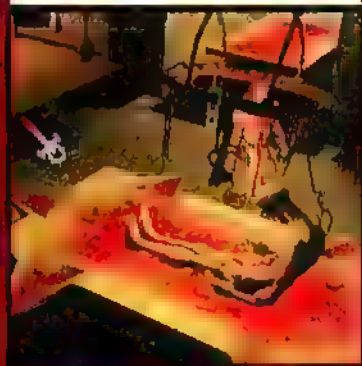
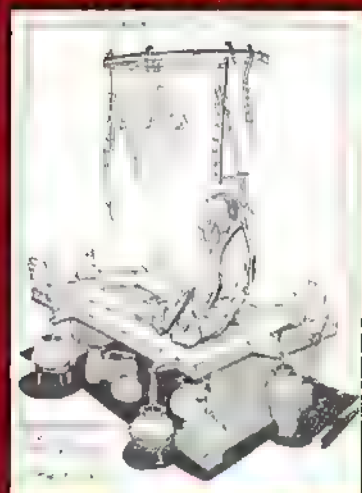
to tweak. Your stats are going to respond to how you role-play the game. For example, are you a heartless murderer, killing off your innocent human victims after sucking their blood, or do you just feed off your victims and let them live? Progression through the levels will also yield the standard RPG booty of increasingly powerful weaponry, armor, and magic spells (called "disciplines" in *Vampire*), such as the ability to summon beasts, turn into mist, or cast healing abilities.

Multiplayer capabilities still seemed a bit sketchy for now, but the basic idea seems to be to offer players a variety of different modes, such as human vs. vampires, clan vs. clan, or cooperative play, in which four players could go through the story together. (This has not been finalized, however.)

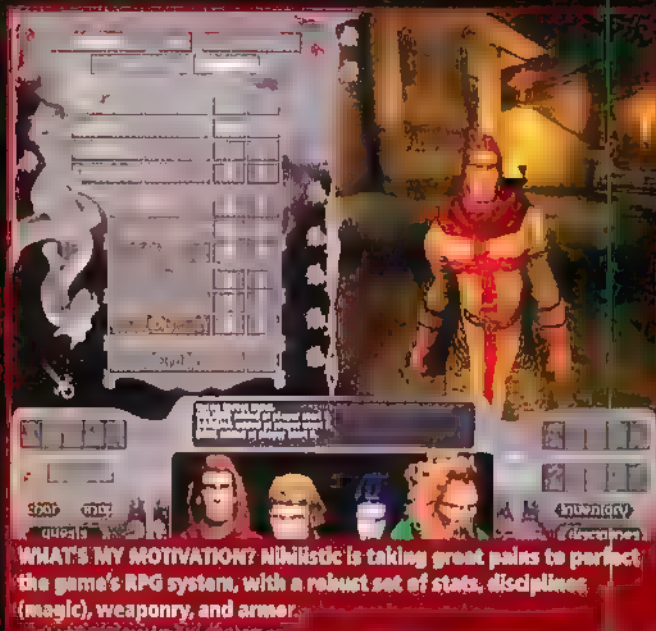
Finally, Nihilistic is planning to ship the game with both a level editor and user-accessible scripting language. This means that users will be able to fully customize the game.



## THAT'S GOTTA HURT!



The grisly experiments performed on humans by the Cappadocian clan makes its way from concept art to 3D-rendered graphics.

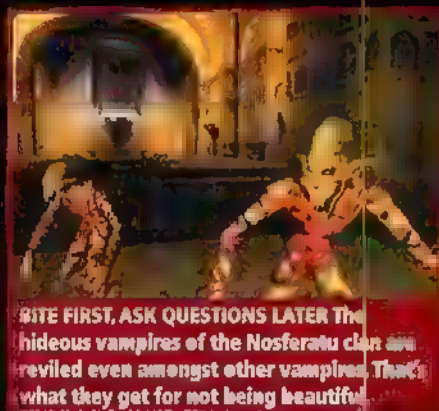


**WHAT'S MY MOTIVATION?** Nihilistic is taking great pains to perfect the game's RPG system, with a robust set of stats, disciplines (magic), weaponry, and armor.

### C.O.D. (Care of the Devil)

Steeped in storytelling, with deep role-playing elements, yet loaded with eye candy and visceral action, REDEMPTION is taking shape as one of the best chances for success for one of the elusive holy grails of gaming: the mature, emotionally involving action game. Nihilistic certainly has the right stuff to pull it off, and the game in progress so far shows lots of promise. If it doesn't suck when released this November, then it'll be us doing the sucking—blood-sucking that is. We can hardly wait. **CGW**

*Jeff Green has never sucked anyone's blood, but if forced to do so, would like it to be from Carmen Electra's veins. He only admits to watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer once, for research.*



**BITE FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS LATER** The hideous vampires of the Nosferatu clan are reviled even amongst other vampires. That's what they get for not being beautiful.

## Nihilists R Us

Although they haven't publicly challenged anyone to "be their bitch" yet, the game designers at Nihilistic Software would actually have a strong case for themselves if they ever wanted to do so. Here's the line-up of the top team members and just some of their past accomplishments, in which they played leading roles. You be the judge.

### At Nihilistic

**Ray Gresko** (project leader)  
**Robert Huebner** (lead programmer)  
**Steve Tietze** (lead level designer)

### Previously worked on...

**DARK FORCES**, **JEDI KNIGHT**  
**DESCENT**, **JEDI KNIGHT**, **STARCRIFT**  
**QUAKE II MISSION PACK**, **GROUND ZERO**, **DUKE NUKEM 3D**,  
**QUAKE MISSION PACK**, **DISSOLUTION OF ETERNITY**





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# Werewolf:

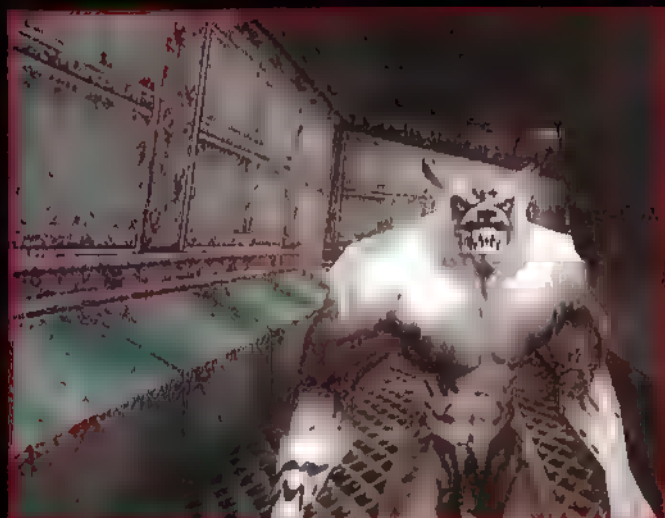
## The Apocalypse—Heart of the Gaia

**DreamForge's Follow-up to SANITARIUM Is  
Another Fever-pitched Nightmare**

by Jeff Green

**M**aybe it's something in the water. Maybe it's those long months stuck out in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by snow. Or maybe, at root, they're just a bunch of weirdos. Whatever the cause, the fact is that the folks at DreamForge Entertainment in Greensburg, Pennsylvania are tapping into some weird crevices of their minds to create some of the most memorably twisted computer games around right now.

DreamForge's previous game was the brilliant, nightmarish *SANITARIUM*, which just tied with LucasArts' *GRIM FANDANGO* for CGW's Best Adventure Game of the Year award elsewhere in this issue. Now the team is hard at work on its next game, *WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE—HEART OF THE GAIA*. And after braving the freezing weather and spending some time with the team, I'm here to report that the fevered minds at DreamForge have another disturbing experience on their hands. Be very afraid.



**DON'T BE SCARED** It's you, in Crinos form. This badass is 8-foot tall and not afraid to use those claws. He also regenerates health points.

**ME, MYSELF, AND I IN WEREWOLF** you'll constantly morph between three forms—a teenage boy, a wolf, and a 8-foot tall wolfman.

### Night of the Long Knives

Like *VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE*, *WEREWOLF* is based on the pen-and-paper role-playing game of the same name from White Wolf Publishing (see "Doggie Style" sidebar, page 125), and takes place in White Wolf's goth/punk horror universe known as the World Of Darkness—a world not unlike our own, except for the minor detail that the Apocalypse is at hand and monsters roam the earth. The horror is not just "out there," though—it's internal and personal, as you play a werewolf.

As envisioned by White Wolf, werewolves are complicated, often tragic creatures—not simply the snarling, hairy beasts of cheesy old horror movies. The RPG's mythology is actually so detailed and complex that it can't possibly be done justice here, but here is the cheat-sheet overview: the Garou, as the werewolves are called, are seen as ages-old protectors of the Earth, or Gaia, fighting against the creeping corruption of the world by the Wyrm, the physical and symbolic manifestation of evil. Once rulers over the earth and mankind (which is why they are hated and feared by humans), the Garou have dispersed and grown few in number over the centuries, while the Wyrm continues its evil march towards the Apocalypse. Stopping the Wyrm, and coming to grips with one's identity as a supernatural beast, is what *WEREWOLF* is all about.

Genre: Action/RPG  
Publisher: ASC Games  
Developer: DreamForge Entertainment  
Release Date: Q4 '99

[www.dreamforge.com](http://www.dreamforge.com)

In **HEART OF THE GAIA**, DreamForge plunges us into this nightmare world with its own particular tale of violent, psychological terror. It is the story of Ryan McCullough, a teenage boy who learns, as the game opens, that he is a werewolf. Over the course of five episodes—set in London, Greece, the U.S., Mexico, and the “Umbra” (spirit world)—Ryan learns of his heritage, of his new powers as a werewolf, and of his key role in the war against the Wyrms.

### Dog Eat Dog

In **SANITARIUM**, DreamForge crafted what was essentially an “old school” game, both gameplay- and graphics-wise. In **WEREWOLF**, they make a quantum leap towards the cutting edge. The team has licensed the **UNREAL** engine, and is using it to create a take-no-prisoners action-RPG that, even in the early stage in which I viewed it, is brimming with creativity. While some levels maintain a relative sense of “normalcy,” like the U.S. episode set at the headquarters of the Wurm-infested Pentex Inc., by the time you get to the Umbra, all sense of reality has vanished, and you’re exploring a world of pure, horrific imagination.

**WEREWOLF** maintains **UNREAL**’s graphic sophistication, but adds an off-kilter sense of unease throughout the 20 levels that is distinctly DreamForge’s—“Oz meets David Lynch,” as Paul Warne, one of the game’s level designers, aptly described it. Gone is **UNREAL**’s gee-whiz prettiness, replaced instead with a darker, more surreal look steeped in dread and fear.

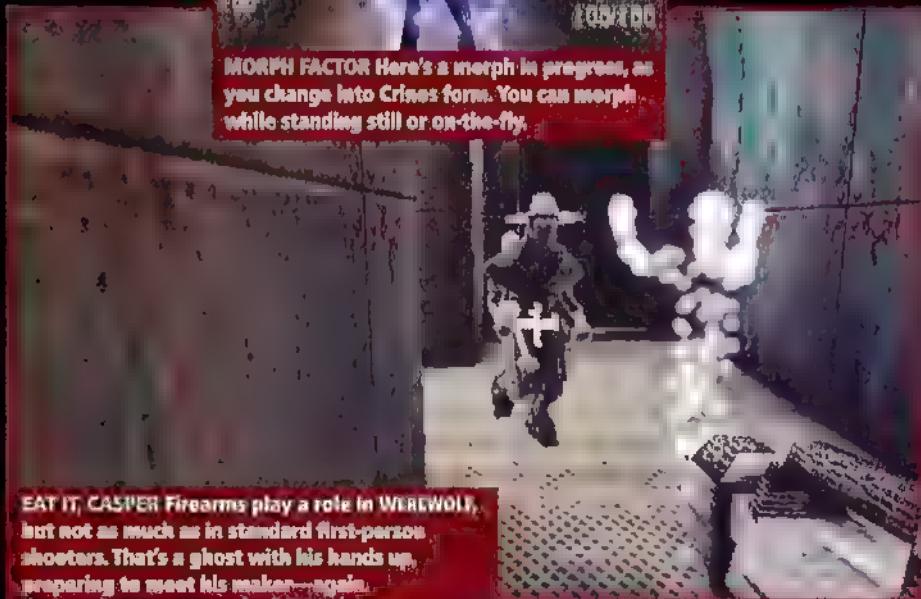
Just as Valve made the **QUAKE** engine its own for **HALF-LIFE**, DreamForge is reshaping the **UNREAL** engine to suit its own twisted purposes. First, you will be able to switch dynamically between first- and third-person perspectives—and you will need to use both as you make your way through the game’s varied action and puzzle-oriented sequences. In third-person perspective, DreamForge is implementing a “morph” effect for your character so that your view will never be blocked.

The coolest bit of technology I saw, however, was the game’s morphing effect. As a werewolf, you’ll be able to morph on-the-fly between three different forms: Homid (human), Crinos (a 9-foot-tall half man/half wolf) and Lupus (wolf). The animated effect is awesome to behold in both first- and third-person perspectives, and the way the game feels and looks (the interface changes to reflect your current form) is far more varied than in the standard action shooter.

The levels have been designed to emphasize different Garou skills. Certain places and puzzles require you to assume specific forms, and each form has its own set of advantages and disadvantages. For example, as a Crinos, you are a badass superbeast with pumped-up physical



**MORPH FACTOR** Here’s a morph in progress, as you change into Crinos form. You can morph while standing still or on-the-fly.



**EAT IT, CASPER** Firearms play a role in **WEREWOLF**, but not as much as in standard first-person shooters. That’s a ghost with his hands up, preparing to meet his maker—again.



**DEEPER**

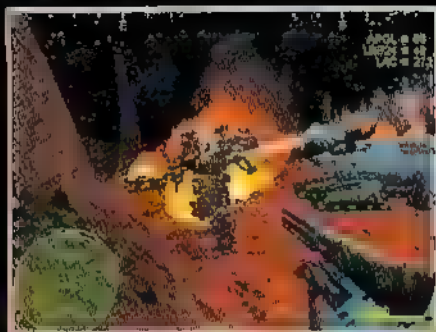
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skills and the ability to regenerate health—but you can't carry a firearm. As a wolf, you can travel at incredible speeds (wonderfully depicted in the game engine), and you have a heightened sense of smell (which is realized by "trails" you can follow).

### Night prowler

Such skills are reflected and played upon in the level design. In some areas, you must camouflage yourself by remaining in human form. One of the levels (set in Greece) is essentially a hunt, in which you must swiftly track down an enemy through a labyrinthine underground cavern; here, wolf form is emphasized.

Weapons play a crucial role, of course, though again, it's much different from a standard shooter. With only the human form able to carry a gun, melee combat is emphasized instead, both with your own claws and with deadly weapons like the kiaiwe. The Garou are also blessed with "gifts," which are magical abilities learned from the spirit world. As you progress through levels, you will be able to visit a gift hall in the Umbra and choose among a series of increasingly more powerful gifts to add to your arsenal. You'll also pick up talens along the way, which are magical items giving you one-time, limited-use ability, such as high-powered scent tracking.

The game's multiplayer levels play off all the same concepts. You are not marines running around with guns, but supernatural creatures, and the goal is to simulate that experience. Weapons will be fewer, and knowing when and where to morph will be key to your strategy. Scent-tracking, for example, will be perfect for hunting people down, and may serve as the perfect solution, at



**LIVE FROM LONDON—THE DAMNED** Over the course of 20 levels, **WEREWOLF** will take you through London (shown here), Greece, the United States, Mexico, and a surreal spirit world.

long last, to the problem of campers, who will be sitting ducks for werewolves.

One of the multiplayer levels, by the way, perfectly demonstrated DreamForge's channeled dementia. Designed by the single-player game's writer, Chris Pasetto, the level was a warped, Escher-like maze, where every wall is set at a 45-degree angle from one another—essentially turning any surface into a floor, wall, or ceiling. The feeling is almost like being in *DESCENT*, but with your feet stuck to the ground.

### Chair? The dog a bone

Thanks to White Wolf's epic back story, and DreamForge's own gifted storytelling skills, **WEREWOLF** is going to be much, much more than just a horror-based shooter.

It's as deep and plot-driven as an adventure game, with numerous cut-scenes between (and sometimes in the middle of) each level.

White Wolf's universe is so prohibitively huge and complex that one computer game couldn't possibly reference it all, but DreamForge is taking pains to cover most of the major bases, and include references to touchstone events and characters to please the hard-core fans of the pen-and-paper RPG.

Members of some of the 13 Garou tribes play crucial roles, including the ferocious Red Talons; the dark, warrior-like Shadow Lords; and the noble Wendigo. Though it won't mean



**IN MY ROOM** Ryan McCullough is just your average American teen with your average American room. Except for that whole turning into a 9-foot werewolf thing.



DID I MENTION THAT YOU'RE UGLY? Another of the game's monsters—the Freak Feet.

much to the uninitiated, at first, longtime WEREWOLF fans will be thrilled to learn that Ryan is the last living carrier of the gene of the legendary, lost tribe of the White Howlers—crucial figures in one of the RPG's milestone events.

In brief, White Howlers were a group of noble werewolves who, in ages past, descended into a Wyrn pit for battle and lost big time, emerging transformed into the Black Spiral Dancers, mutated servants of the Wyrn and now the Garou's most dangerous enemies. As the game climaxes, Ryan will eventually find himself in the Black Spiral Labyrinth itself, the place of initiation for Black Spiral Dancers, where, *Star Wars*-style, Ryan is tempted to join the dark side, and must grapple with the evil within.

#### Evil Walks

DreamForge is infusing the game with the kind of mature, emotional resonance that made *SANITARIUM* so memorable, and that also powers White Wolf's RPGs. The script excerpts that I read revealed a story filled with family tragedy and psychological terror, as your progression through the game leads you to an ever-more terrifying vision of your past, your future, and your role in stopping the Apocalypse.

As in *SANITARIUM*, DreamForge is pulling no punches here. WEREWOLF is going to be a very scary, adult game.

Which is why I was happy to escape DreamForge's frozen confines relatively unscathed, and head back

## DOGGY STYLE

**W**hite Wolf may not be a household name amongst computer gamers, but in the pen-and-paper gaming world, they are giants, with a large, loyal following second only to Wizards of the Coast/TSR's *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* franchise.

White Wolf's universe—began in 1981 with their first (and still most popular) game, *Vampire: The Masquerade*—is the World Of Darkness, an alternate reality where supernatural creatures roam (and essentially rule) the Earth. All of their World of Darkness games—which also include *Werewolf*, *Mage*, *Wraith*, and *Changeling*—are infused with a hip goth-punk sensibility, an amalgam of diverse influences like classic horror, Anne Rice, punk rock, and more.

As Chris McDonough, one of the company's founders, explained: "Our founding idea for the company was storytelling. It's possible to play our games and not have any combat or killing the entire session. Our focus is on politics, emotions, and more mature concepts like sex." As such, the games are designed to appeal to an older crowd than the AD&D games.

*Vampire: The Masquerade*, has sold over a million copies since its release (followed in popularity by *Werewolf*), and the small staff of around 35 employees cranks out about 80 new game books a year, supplementing and expanding the World of Darkness. Last year's big *Vampire* project, for example, was called *Kindred of the East*—expanding the overall storyline into Asia.

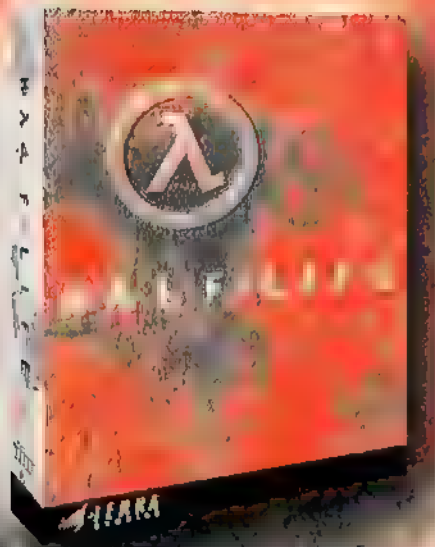
White Wolf has flirted with mainstream recognition for quite a while (the short-lived TV series *The Kindred* was based on *Vampire: The Masquerade*), and the two computer games now in development are likely to accelerate the process. They're also currently at work with Hyperbole Studios (*THE X-FILES GAME*) on a computer game version of *Mage: The Ascension*—though as of this writing it still has no publisher.

Gamers interested in White Wolf should check out the company's Web site ([www.whitewolf.com](http://www.whitewolf.com)), where pen-and-paper players run chat sessions and can download character creation sheets and sample game information. —Jeff Green

to the sunny, relatively sane CGW offices. Like Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*, something terrifying is being whipped up in the snowbound brains at DreamForge. Let's just be glad it's only a computer game. **CGW**



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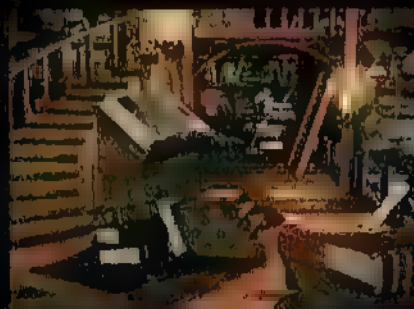
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# Nocturne

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**CEMETARY POLKA** The Stranger deals with a pack of blood-dripping zombies in a chilly graveyard. Notice how some of the undead are wielding the blown-off limbs of their cohorts.

by Robert Coffey

**W**hen we first saw NOCTURNE, we thought, for one brief moment, it was just another third-person action/adventure game. That was before the zombie hordes. That was before the main character literally shot the head off one of the undead, the severed noggin hitting the ground like a piñata filled with chili. That was before the ghouls overwhelmed the hero, clubbing him with their own severed limbs before feasting on his guts. And that was right about the time we knew we couldn't wait to play NOCTURNE.

## Sin City

Terminal Reality deserves kudos for *not* setting their game in the standard post-apocalyptic universe. Instead, NOCTURNE posits an alternative past, one where a paranormally aware Theodore Roosevelt, in an effort to counteract growing supernatural threats, created a special investigation bureau unofficially dubbed the SpookHouse. The game actually takes place some 40–50 years later, circa 1940, when the SpookHouse, staffed with mysterious agents and turncoat monsters, is operating in a new, worldwide jurisdiction under the watchful eye of the United Nations.

Gamers will play as one of two characters: either the Shadow-like Stranger or female scientific genius Doc Holliday, though only the Stranger was available in the exclusive build I got to play. With his dark features, flowing trenchcoat, and a fedora pulled low to his eyes, the Stranger is a figure straight out of the pulp fiction that is part of the inspiration for NOCTURNE.

There will be other SpookHouse agents available to players, just in the role of NPCs. Each of the NPCs has special expertise that the gamer will need to use in order to solve puzzles, kill monsters, and generally progress in the game. NPCs run the gamut, including a beautiful young Italian gunslinger named Gabriella; a former heavyweight boxer who's added extra punch to his fists courtesy of some wicked blades; a Cajun voodoo master who fires magic projectiles and can ethereally pass through obstacles; and a Romanian vampire hunter whose half-vampire heritage makes her particularly effective—if not especially fun to be around.

## Hell Ain't a Bad Place to Be

The SpookHouse adversaries come directly from the world of classic horror. Snarling werewolves, misshapen vampires, vampire brides, mindless zombies, and entrail-munching ghouls are just some of the hideous creatures you'll bloodily

Genre: Action  
Publisher: Gathering of Developers  
Developer: Terminal Reality  
Release Date: Q4 '98  
www.terminalreality.com

dispatch. Absolutely grisly, these are not the campy, winking renditions of monsters we've seen in other games. For examples, the zombies look like something straight out of *Night of the Living Dead*, each shambling corpse in a different state of gooey putrescence. Slow and stupid, zombies attack in enormous packs, happy to just rip into you with their arms or to bludgeon you with the severed arm or head of a fallen comrade.

NOCTURNE's emphasis on the ghastly is perhaps no more evident than when you die at the hands of ghouls. No pleasant "Game Over" screen here—you're treated to the sight of the ghouls falling upon your body and feasting, making delightfully wet slurping sounds.

Ideally, you'll be watching yourself kill the undead, not vice versa. Taking place from a third-person perspective, you'll stride through dank castles and desolate graveyards in your quest to rid the world of unnatural menaces. I found combat to be extremely gratifying, even though only a couple of

weapons were included in the early build I played. Still, a well-placed shot could blow the head off a ghoul while unloading lead into their midsection could rip those horrors right in half. My favorite weapon was the crossbow, especially when I used the burning bolts. Doomed ghouls, crossbow bolts stuck in their neck and belly, fire spreading across their limbs, desperately tried to stop the onslaught before falling at my feet—that's true, killing satisfaction.

In NOCTURNE, generally the best way is the goriest way. A typical situation might involve a monster guarding a key you need atop a platform with a giant swinging blade. You could waste some of your precious ammo trying to kill the beast, or you could just lure him into the blade so he's hacked to bits. Bribing

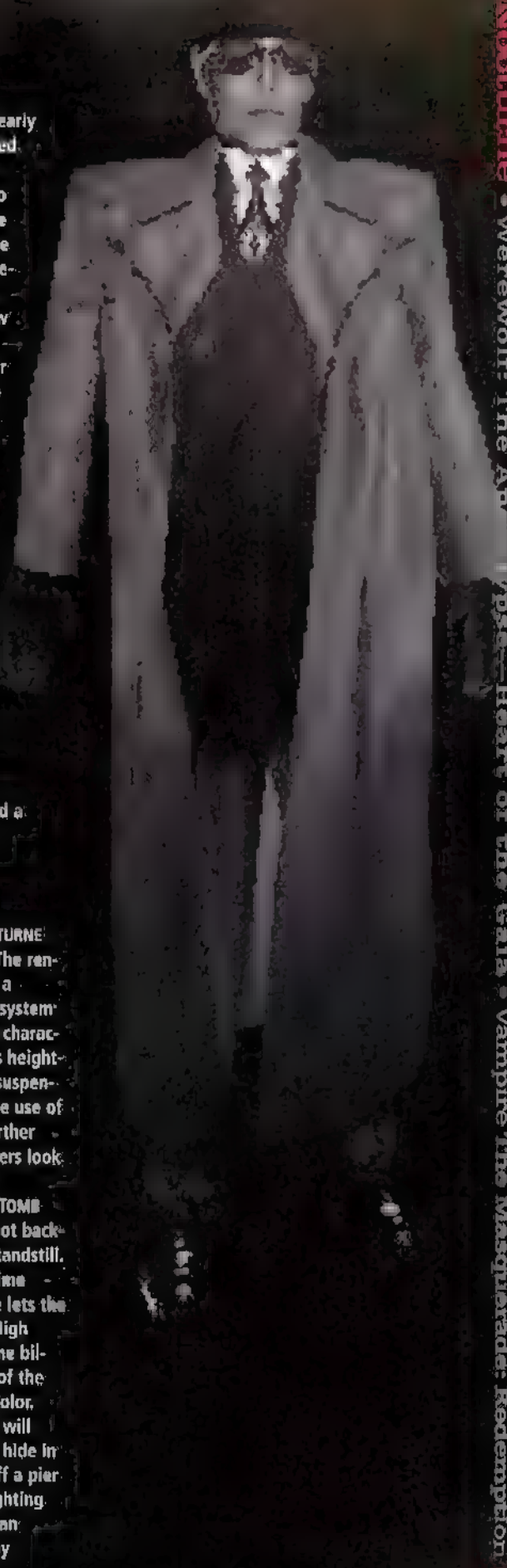
him with dinner and a movie just isn't an option.

### Get It Not

Graphically, NOCTURNE is simply dazzling. The rendering engine uses a skeletal animation system for smooth, lifelike character movement, thus heightening the gamer's suspension of disbelief. The use of dynamic physics further means that characters look and move like real humans—no more TOMB RAIDER-esque 10-foot backflips from a dead standstill. An advanced real-time dithering technique lets the engine operate in High Color, outputting one billion colors instead of the 24 million of True Color. Volumetric fogging will allow characters to hide in fog banks rolling off a pier while volumetric lighting effects help create an appropriately creepy

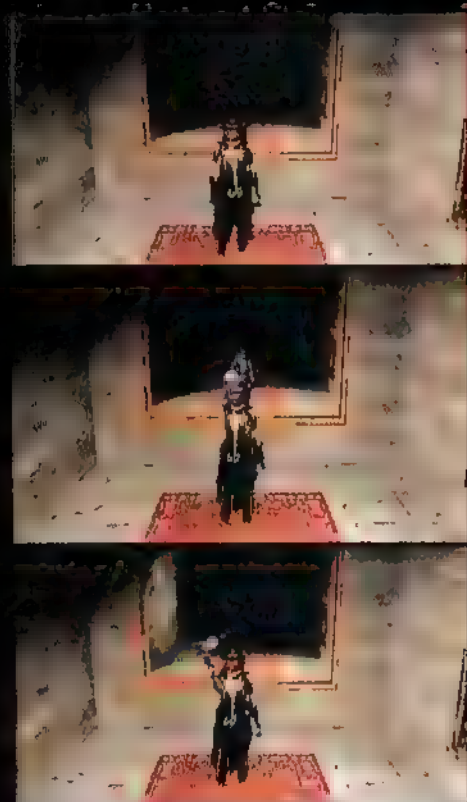


**THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS** Things aren't always what they seem in NOCTURNE. Here an apparent mirror reflection turns out to be a shape-shifting horror mimicking our hero.





# Light and Shadow



One of the most impressive aspects of the NOCTURNE rendering engine is its handling of light. Everything is lit with volumetric lighting, casting real shadows on the characters and environments in the game. By its very nature, volumetric lighting is interactive, not canned, mapped, or pre-scripted, and occurs in real time. You can really see this in the way NOCTURNE deals with light reflection and shadows. In the first screenshot, Gabriella stands in a dark room before a mirror. What little you see in the mirror is shrouded in darkness. In the second shot, light from Gabriella's flashlight bounces back to illuminate her. In the last shot, Gabriella moves the light to her left, falling into darkness herself while the reflected light reveals a doorway previously hidden in darkness. In the bottom two screenshots, notice how the shape of the shadows from the bookstand, the Stranger and even the dead ghoul on the ground has subtly shifted in response to the repositioning of the Stranger's lantern.



atmosphere (see "Light and Shadow" sidebar).

Indicative of NOCTURNE's staggering attention to detail is the way the long, flowing coats of the characters are handled. Where other companies would be content to bang out a nice little coat animation, Terminal Reality has gone to the trouble of folding a cloth modeling program into the game, allowing cloth objects to move independently in the game. This means coats flutter as they trail a moving character, whip above their head as they fall in a pit, or hug their calves as they step backward. Heavy curtains are similarly modeled, falling and swaying believably when characters step through them into hidden vestibules. This is a game engine that positively screams "licensing opportunity."

But you better start saving now if you expect to play NOCTURNE when it's released this Halloween. Even when the code is optimized it's going to require



**SWING TIME** Now that the big, swinging blade is showering the room with undead body parts, the Stranger will have a better chance to retrieve the key on the platform.

a Pentium II class machine with a truckload of RAM—especially in software mode. Should gamers have the necessary hardware, NOCTURNE seems well-positioned to be causing some hellacious nightmares later this year. **CGW**

*Robert Coffey is not a cannibalistic ghoul, but he plays one on TV. He also plays HALF-LIFE deathmatches on a regular basis.*

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# Pentium III—A Must Have?

*Pretty Impressive Test Results, but Game Support Needed*

by Dave Salvator

As you read this, Pentium III (Katmai) chips are just beginning to ship. While it has a CPU core that's identical to the Pentium II, the Pentium III has a new feature, called Katmai New Instructions, that's being heavily touted as a must-have for gamers. And from our initial test results, it's likely there will be a Pentium III in your future.

Katmai New Instructions (KNI), which has been rechristened SSIMD—yet another brilliant marketing moniker from the folks who brought you "Celeron"—is designed to greatly accelerate matrix math operations, which are key to speeding up transform and lighting operations in a 3D pipeline. Transforms involve calculating polygon movements from frame to frame; geometric lighting involves rendering light sources and the objects they illuminate, rather than using light maps that require multitexturing

## First Test Results

We got our hands on a 500MHz Pentium III on an Intel SE440 motherboard, which uses Intel's 440BX chipset. We put 128MB of 100MHz SDRAM into this guy and took it for a spin. There are two ways to take advantage of SSIMD (SSIMD): either through Direct3D's T/L engine or by writing custom assembly code. SSIMD support will be included in DirectX 6.1, which should be available as you read this.

To measure how using SSIMD via Direct3D might enhance

## Pentium III 3D WinBench 99 Results Table

### Transform

81.2 1.7

### Transform & Lighting

36 70.9

Pentium II

Pentium III

Percent Improved

game performance, we used 3D WinBench's Transform and Transform & Lighting tests, which test the CPU portion of Direct3D's pipeline. While there wasn't much performance gain in the Transform test, SSIMD showed a whopping 71 percent gain over traditional floating-point code in the Transform & Lighting test.

So, in a 3D game using Direct3D's T/L engine, SSIMD, like AMD's 3DNow!, can make lighting go much faster, although it doesn't seem to do much for transforms.

We also looked at several SSIMD demos, including an upcoming title from Rage called DISPATCHED, which looked good and ran smoothly. At press time, the list of announced SSIMD titles included BATTLEZONE 2 and HEAVY GEAR 2 by Activision, as well as Microsoft's FLIGHT SIM 2000. Some shipping titles, like DID's WARGASM and EA's MADDEN '99 will be patched to take advantage of the new technology.

Until a game is written to take advantage of SSIMD, it won't really go much faster than it does on current Pentium IIs.

But given the impressive gains to be had by using SSIMD (and Intel's dominant market share), developers are likely to use SSIMD in titles for the '99 holiday season.

Intel's only real competition this year will come from AMD's new K7 processor, which is due sometime in the latter half of the year. K7 will use AMD's 3D Now! technology, which also can accelerate transforms and lighting.

Stay tuned for the 3DNow! KNI shootout here in CGW later this year. —Dave Salvator

## 3D IronWorks—TNT, Part Deux

As you read this, nVidia has begun shipping its TNT2 graphics accelerator. The biggest news about this part is that it shifts nVidia to 0.25-micron process technology, which shrinks the chip's size and allows it to run faster while putting out less heat. Thanks to this new production process, TNT will clock in at 125MHz, the original design goal of the RIVA TNT. Given that the TNT architecture works on two pixels per clock, this new clock speed will yield a peak fill rate of 250Mpixels/sec, which will keep nVidia very competitive with ATI's new Rage 128-based cards. Sources inside nVidia suggest that even faster clock rates may be possible. Other highlights include support for a maximum of 32MB of onboard memory, digital flat-panel display support, and AGP 4x support (maximum data rate of 1GB/sec moving data from system memory to the 3D accelerator). —Lloyd Case & Dave Salvator





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Model Name	<b>New!</b> Millennia C400	Millennia 450	Millennia MAX 400	Millennia MAX 450
Processor	Intel® Celeron® processor 400MHz	Intel® Pentium® II processor 450MHz	Intel® Pentium® II processor 400MHz	Intel® Pentium® II processor 450MHz
Cache	128KB internal L2 cache	512KB internal L2 cache	512KB internal L2 cache	512KB internal L2 cache
RAM	64MB SDRAM	64MB 100MHz SDRAM	128MB 100MHz SDRAM	128MB 100MHz SDRAM
Hard Drive	3.4GB Ultra ATA hard drive*	13GB Ultra ATA hard drive*	13GB Ultra ATA hard drive*	13GB Ultra ATA hard drive*
Monitor	17" Micron 700Hz monitor (15.1" display)	17" Micron 700Hz monitor (15.1" display)	17" Micron 700Hz monitor (15.1" display)	17" Micron 700Hz monitor (15.1" display)
DVD/CD-ROM	40X max speed CD-ROM drive	40X max speed CD-ROM drive	52X DVD 16X drive	52X DVD 16X drive
Modem	3Com USRobotics V.90 WinModem**	3Com USRobotics V.90 WinModem**	3Com USRobotics V.90 WinModem**	3Com USRobotics V.90 WinModem**
Graphics	nVidia Riva 128, 8MB SGRAM 3D X2 AGP graphics	nVidia Riva 128, 8MB SGRAM 3D X2 AGP graphics	16MB Diamond Viper 550 1st 2X AGP graphics	16MB Diamond Viper 550 1st 2X AGP graphics
Sound System	PCI 64-voice WaveTable sound	PCI 64-voice WaveTable sound	PCI 128-voice WaveTable sound	PCI 128-voice WaveTable sound
Speakers	Advent 2000 speakers	Advent 2000 speakers	Advent 2000 speakers	Advent 2000 speakers
Warranty	5-year/3-year Micron Power Limited warranty	5-year/3-year Micron Power Limited warranty	5-year/3-year Micron Power Limited warranty	5-year/3-year Micron Power Limited warranty
Training	1-year free* training @ Micron U online	1-year free* training @ Micron U online	1-year free* training @ Micron U online	1-year free* training @ Micron U online
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Also Includes	New MicroTone™ case 104-key enhanced keyboard Microsoft IntelliMouse® 3.5" floppy drive	New MicroTone™ case 104-key enhanced keyboard Microsoft IntelliMouse® 3.5" floppy drive	New MicroTone™ case 104-key enhanced keyboard Microsoft IntelliMouse® 3.5" floppy drive	New MicroTone™ case 104-key enhanced keyboard Microsoft IntelliMouse® 3.5" floppy drive
Factory Direct Price	<b>\$1,299</b>	<b>\$1,699</b>	<b>\$1,799</b>	<b>\$1,999</b>
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# 3D Babble On

## Making Sense of 3D Testing Verbiage

**B**ack in 1946, W.K. Lessing (using the pseudonym Dolton Edwards) wrote a small masterpiece called *Meihem in Ce Klasrum*. This short story first appeared in the

September 1946 *Analog* magazine and has been anthologized several times. Written in a satirical, "modest proposal" style, it laid out a series of steps that would take the English language to a fully phonetic spelling system. Since there are multiple ways to spell similar pronunciations, the resulting choices outlined in the text made for a hilarious send-up of modern language.

I often think of that story when I write product reviews. The jargon we're forced to use in this business can make for some pretty dense reading. So I thought I'd take a deep breath before 1999 hits (it's December 31 as I write this) and talk a bit about some of the 3D jargon that we use when writing reviews. I promise I won't define *bilinear filtering* yet again. But since we spend a lot of time discussing graphics cards, some of you may be wondering exactly what a few of the terms mean. For the more technically savvy reader, consider this something of a refresher.

### Webster Can't Help You Now

When I think of the jargon we've come to rely on in writing reviews of 3D accelerators, three terms in particular come to mind: *v-sync*, *refresh rate* and *frame buffer*. Three other terms related to these are *back buffers*, *front buffers*, and *page flipping*. Of the initial three, *v-sync* is probably the most difficult to understand, but to do so you need first to understand the other terms.

All current-generation graphics cards have onboard video memory, ranging from 2MB to 32MB (more for some very high-end cards). The majority of those cards have a single, unified memory architecture when handling 3D graphics, meaning that both the polygon data and the texture maps (bit-maps) share the card's memory. Voodoo and Voodoo<sup>2</sup> are unique in the world of low-cost



drawings of an object or creature designed to produce animation. Let's say, for example, that you've got a series of pictures of a tiger with its body and legs in slightly different positions on successive pages. Flip through the pages, and you create the illusion that the tiger is running.

Now consider your computer as a flip-book, with one "page" being the amount of video data needed to create one screen's worth of graphics. At any given time, the *front buffer* is that portion of memory holding the page that's currently being displayed. Simultaneously, a separate portion of video memory—the *back buffer*—is invisibly creating the next image to be displayed. Once the back buffer has a fully rendered image—the next page of game animation—it's "flipped" to the front. In reality, what happens

itself. When struck by the electron beam, the phosphors light up and you see a pixel. The beam scans the screen one line at a time. The time it takes for the beam to paint all the way across the screen and all the way down to the bottom is the refresh rate. On a 640x480 display, a 75Hz refresh rate means that it takes 1/75 of a second for the electron beam to scan 480 lines down the screen, with each line made up of 640 pixels. This movement of the electron beam across and down the screen is called the *vertical retrace*.

Now, finally, we get to *v-sync*. In order to get the best image quality, you ideally want each frame of animation to start at the beginning of the electron guns' beam cycle. If the graphics card is fast enough, it can create the back-buffer image just as the electron guns finish "painting" the

## The jargon we're forced to use in this business can make for some dense reading.

accelerators because they feature a separate chunk of memory just for storing texture maps.

The *frame buffer* is simply that area of video memory that's holding the data currently displayed by the graphics card. But wait, there's more. In your normal, 2D Windows display, the frame buffer changes any time the onscreen image changes. But that process is far too slow for 2D and 3D animation to run at the requisite 30 frames per second or more. Because of their higher graphics needs, games use a technique called *page flipping* to speed things up.

If you've ever seen an animation flip-book, you already know what page flipping is. A flip-book is a small book with a series of

is that a few bits change values and the memory that was once invisible is suddenly visible, and you see the next image. Meanwhile, the area of video memory that had been the front buffer now becomes the back buffer, and the accelerator begins to write graphics data for the next page to that chunk of memory. Using a front buffer and a single back buffer is a process called *double buffering*.

### Don't Get (Re)Fresh

Now let's talk about refresh rate, which is the rate at which your monitor's three electron guns (red, blue, and green) paint the screen. Inside your monitor these guns send a beam of electrons to strike the phosphors on the screen

front-buffer image on your screen. The back buffer then gets flipped—becoming the front buffer—just as the electron guns start their refresh cycle.

In reality, performance can vary. If the back buffer isn't quite finished, the game will wait until it is finished—and the image you see for the next refresh cycle doesn't change. Then, when the electron guns start at the top corner again, the now-completed back buffer is flipped and becomes the visible image. This waiting for the electron gun to reach the starting point is called *flip on v-sync*, or *v-sync* for short. The flip is waiting for the vertical retrace to start at the beginning—in other words, the page flipping is synchronized to the vertical retrace—and that's

where the term v-sync comes from.

This creates a problem when measuring the performance of a graphics card. If a card barely misses the vertical retrace and has to wait another cycle on a regular basis, that means the graphics card is sitting there doing nothing. But when you measure performance, you want to measure the component actually doing *something*. In fact, you get odd harmonics of the refresh rate as your frame rate. For example, if the refresh rate is 60Hz, and you see that the game is reporting 30 frames per second—half the refresh rate—that's an immediate cue that the card is sitting idle much of the time.

The trick for testing is to turn off v-sync, meaning that the back buffer is flipped to the front buffer as soon as it's filled with data, even if the electron guns haven't reached the end of the refresh cycle. This means that the image on your screen may not be fully painted when the next frame is flipped. The electron beam doesn't start over—it just paints the next pixel, which is from a new buffer. In the extreme, this can cause some really grotesque image quality problems, called *tearing*, but it is useful for measuring performance, because the card never sits idle. That, simply put, is why we turn off v-sync when doing 3D graphics card game testing. Turning off v-sync during gameplay is *not* a good idea, however, because of tearing.

A good compromise is *triple buffering*. Triple

## Tech Tips

### On the Clock

If you have an Intel Socket 7 motherboard with the 430VX chipset that uses SDRAM (they first shipped about two years ago), and you're looking to add memory to your system, you're going to need a slightly different type of SDRAM. When this new memory first started appearing in systems, the industry hadn't settled on a standard, but Intel went ahead and implemented what's called two-clock SDRAM on these early motherboards. Well, as Murphy's Law would have it, the industry went the other way and standardized on four-clock SDRAM, which is what you now find at your local computer store. The two memory types are, of course, incompatible. So, you may want to order this memory from an outfit that specializes in memory, such as Crucial Technology ([www.crucial.com](http://www.crucial.com)) or Kingston ([www.kingston.com](http://www.kingston.com)).

buffering means using a second back buffer—three buffers in all. It uses more memory, but now the game will run at full speed, up to the refresh rate. If you crank up the resolution, triple buffering becomes a good performance measure if the card can't match its frame rate to the refresh rate.

### My Brain Hurts

By now, I hope, you've now got a better handle on some of the jargon you keep seeing

in our 3D graphics card reviews and roundups. If it still has you scratching your head, don't feel too bad—this is complex stuff by any measure. 3D graphics involves so many parts of your system that it's important to understand where the potential bottlenecks are and how to properly gauge performance. It may take a while to grasp, but at least you'll experience a little less, ah, meihem, the next time you read one of our hardware reviews. **CGW**

COMING NEXT MONTH

# Everything

## You Need to Know to Build Your Home Network and Soup Up Your Internet Connection

Next month, check out your complete guide to getting a gaming local area network (LAN) going at home. And, as if that's not enough, we'll also be telling you which high-speed connectivity is best for gamers. Here's just a sampling of what we'll be looking at:

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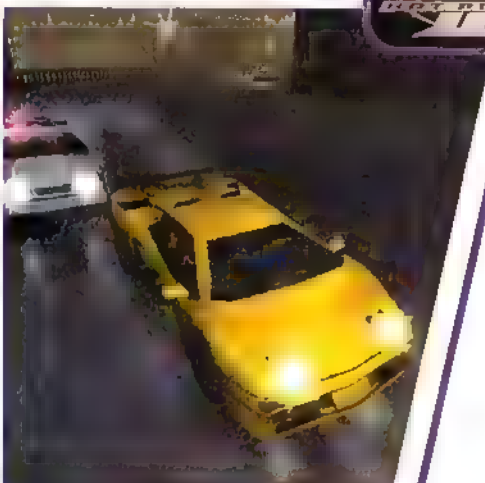
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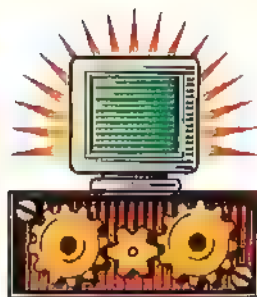


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Motherboard	ASUS P2B-LS	\$360	And it's cheaper than a standalone Ultra2 SCSI card
CPU	Pentium II/450	\$575	It's the top of the heap, for now.
Memory	236MB of CAS/2 Corsair PC100 SDRAM	\$520	Just think, a quarter-gigabyte.
Disk Controller	Built-in Ultra2 SCSI	\$0	BOMB/sec. Oh, yes!
Primary Graphics	Canopus Spectra 2500	\$199	The reverse pass-through works, not to mention great 3D and 2D.
Secondary Graphics	Quantum3D Obolitan X24	\$499	The ultimate, single slot Voodoo2 card
Floppy Drive	Teac	\$20	You still have to have one
Hard Drive	Seagate Cheetah 18	\$1,150	It's big, it's fast, it's loud... two out of three ain't bad.
Backup	Imega Jaz 2	\$350	2GB of backup.
Hard-Drive Cooler	APS Technologies	\$40	Cooler heads prevail
CD-ROM	Plexitor UltraFlex 40	\$155	Can't find the Pioneer SCSI DVD anymore.
Monitor	Viewsonic P817	\$1,550	Can you say bandwidth... and USB, too.
Primary Audio	Diamond Monster Sound MX300	\$99	For four-speaker DirectSound, A3D, and EAX
Speakers	LFI-11	\$500	Beautiful imaging, clean sound.
Rear-channel Speakers	Jamo CS-5	\$500	Ultimate rear-channel powered speakers.
Modem	3Com ImpactIQ	\$200	Faster than 56k. Now if I could only get DSL.
Networking	Built-in Intel 10/100 ethernet chip	\$0	For dragging my buddies.
Case	In-Win Q500 full tower ATX	\$100	New improved model.
Power Supply	Turbocool 300	\$149	More power, Scooty!
Keyboard	Logitech Newtouch	\$45	In with the Newtouch, out with the Natural
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech Cordless Wheel Mouse	\$59	Off the leash.
Action Game Controller	Microsoft SideWinder Freestyle	\$65	Tilt.
Flight Joystick	ThrustMaster F22 Pro	\$129	It just feels right.
Throttle	ThrustMaster TQS	\$145	More control than anyone needs.
Rudder Pedals	ThrustMaster Elite RCS	\$79	Nearly perfect foot placement
Driving Controls	BCC, CDS 4000	\$1,129	For the serious sim driver.

**TOTAL: \$8,557**

## LEAN & MEAN



COMPONENT	PRODUCT	PRICE	THE SKINNY
Motherboard	Abit BH6	\$120	Five PCI slots, Softmenu, 440BX—ready for Kalmal
CPU	Pentium II/400 + fan	\$325	Not far from the 450.
Memory	64MB Corsair PC100 SDRAM	\$122	The only thing better would be 128MB.
Disk Controller	Built-in UDMA/33	\$0	
Primary Graphics	Hercules Dynamite TNT	\$150	Stability, speed, and cooling
Secondary Graphics	Gulliemot Manigamer2	\$99	Voodoo2 for those Glite games.
Floppy Drive	Teac	\$20	Still gotta have it.
Hard Drive	Seagate Medalist Pro 6530	\$160	Fast and now more affordable.
CD-ROM / DVD	Pioneer DRU-704	\$69	35x and cheap to boot.
Monitor	Optquest V75	\$379	Amazingly sharp for under \$400
Primary Audio	Diamond Monster Sound MX300	\$99	A3D and clean audio for under a C-note.
Secondary Audio	N/A	\$0	
Speakers	Yamaha YST-M28	\$60	The best speakers for under \$100. Period.
Modem	Diamond SupraExpress external	\$110	Solid performance, good price.
Networking	N/A	\$0	
Case	Eian Vital T10-AB	\$90	The case for upgraders.
Power Supply	Built-in, 235W	\$0	
Keyboard	Logitech Newtouch	\$45	In with the new, out with the Natural.
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech PS/2 Wheel Mouse	\$18	More frames per second???
Joystick	CH Gamestick 3D	\$50	Still the best balanced flightstick around.

**TOTAL: \$1,916**

All recommendations based on actual evaluations of available products. Prices listed are average low quotes on Web price search engines such as [www.pricewatch.com](http://www.pricewatch.com), or [www.computershopper.com](http://www.computershopper.com).  
List compiled by Dave Salvator and Loyd Case.

# Kick-Ass 3D Performance = Kick-Ass Reviews

"Unlike the TNT and G200, the RAGE 128 can render at 32 bit (aka **True Color**) color depths without the 20-50% performance decrease all other chipsets come with."

Anand Lal Shimpi, Dec. 1998, [www.anandtech.com](http://www.anandtech.com)

"...ATI totally proved 3DFX wrong by showing **32 BIT RENDERING** can be done without a performance hit..."

Duane Pemberton, Dec. 1998, [www.gamersdepot.com](http://www.gamersdepot.com)

"... **ATI RAGE FURY** is now the target for other manufacturers to shoot for..."

Craig Campanaro, Dec. 1998, [www.sharkyextreme.com](http://www.sharkyextreme.com)

"The **RAGE 128** is ready for 32-bit color now, delivering great frame rates and beautiful color."

Marcia and Barry Press, Dec. 1998, [www.avault.com](http://www.avault.com)



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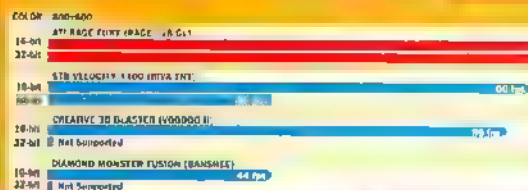
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\*Quake II Frame Rates: All tests run using Quake II v3.19; All tests were done on a Pentium III 450MHz system with 64MB RAM. Windows 98, Direct X 6.0 AT RAGE FURY 128 Velocity 4400, Creative 3D Blaster Voodoo 2, and Diamond Monster Fusion were tested using drivers 4.11.6021 4.10.01 2104-0 037 4.10.0 0094 2.16.4 0.0 0206 respectively.





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## But What About **Katmai?**

**A**

s this year wears on, Intel's newest CPU, Katmai, will become the CPU of choice for gamers. At press time, Intel was just announcing that Katmai's official product name would be Pentium III. And while this moniker won't send tremors through the industry, at least it isn't something silly like Celeron. Anyway, we thought seriously about putting a Katmai



processor into the Power Rig this month, but because pricing information wasn't available—and because next-generation Intel processors tend to be very pricey early in their life cycle—we opted to stick with Pentium II for now. But Pentium IIIs will be shipping about the time you're reading this, and you should take a good look at them to decide if the price difference is worth the investment. The reasons to get Pentium III are pretty compelling. With its Katmai New Instructions (KNI), Pentium IIIs will be able to make the front end of 3D graphics pipelines move along a good deal faster (upwards of 70 percent faster) than their predecessor, provided the game you're playing is Katmai-aware. A bit less compelling, but worth considering, is that Pentium III's top clock rate will debut at 500MHz. The Pentium III should drop into current 440BX motherboards, though you'll need a BIOS update.

If Pentium III's initial price tag feels too steep for your blood, you might consider the much less expensive 400MHz Celeron-A, and wait until Pentium IIIs make their way down the price curve. Given that Katmai-aware titles won't be out in any great number until the latter part of this year, Katmai's main benefit to gamers won't be greatly evident until then. —Dave Salvator

# ATI's True Colors

*Rage Fury Is Ready to Churn Out 32-Bit Color*

by Loyd Case

**W**hile testing the ATI Rage Fury, I had to run it through our benchmarking suite quite a few times to make sure what I really saw was real. I

also pumped more games through it than usual, including some 2D games. While the drivers still need some fixes, my verdict on this card is *wow!*

ATI bases the Rage Fury on its latest 3D accelerator, the Rage 128, which is the second 2D/3D accelerator to combine two rendering pipelines on a single chip (the first being the RIVA TNT). In addition to the twin pipelines, Rage 128 also has two on-chip caches, one for texture data and one for pixel data. Like the TNT, the Rage 128 has an 8-bit stencil buffer, but unlike the TNT, it has a full 32-bit Z-buffer. ATI has also used its interest in video (as in the television style) and has implemented algorithms that should accelerate the software decompression of MPEG 2 video, which is the compression scheme used by DVD video. One interesting feature is the use of bidirectional direct memory execu-

tion, meaning that AGP can be used for all graphics data, not just 3D texture information.

The Fury ships with a staggering 32MB RAM. Only a year ago, most systems shipped with 32MB. Since ATI is using high-density SDRAM, there are only four memory chips on the board itself. The Fury also has TV-out. ATI will be shipping an Xpert 128, with 16MB of RAM and a Rage Magnum, which has 32MB but lacks TV out. Later down the road, ATI will be building an "All-in-Wonder"-style board with the Rage 128 chip.

## And They're Off...

Synthetic benchmarks came back quite impressive. The Rage 128 easily outpaced the competition in WinBench 99 and 3D WinBench 99. Running 3D WinBench 99 at 32-bit color yielded a score of 458—only a few points behind the RIVA TNT 16-bit scores.

The picture isn't completely rosy, however. In many ways, the Rage Fury is better positioned for future games than today's titles. It is, in fact, slower in 3D game performance at 16-bit color than the RIVA TNT or even the Savage3D, though it does outpace 3Dfx's Banshee chip. When bumped up to 32-bit color, the picture changes

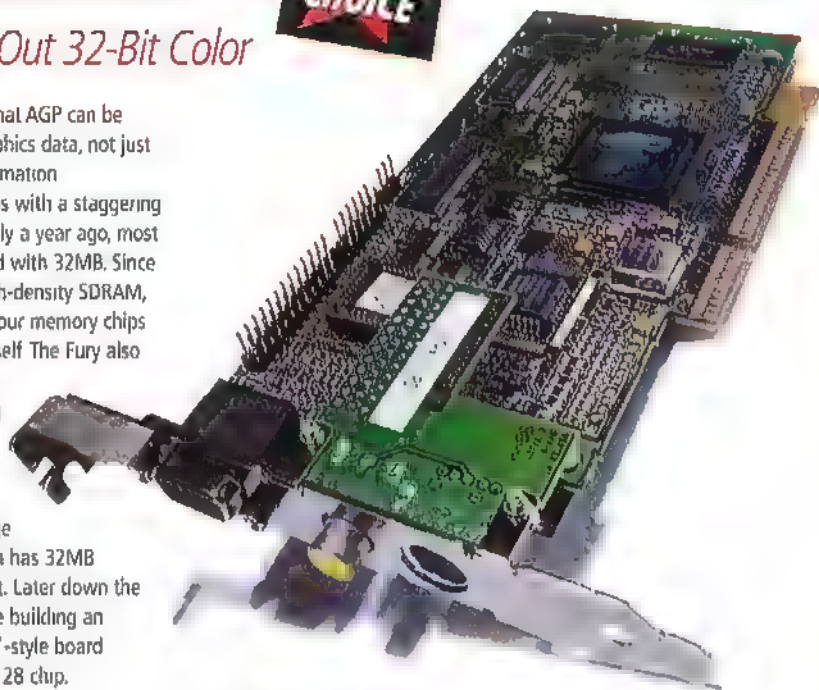
(pun intended). Interestingly, *QUAKE II* ran faster in 32-bit color than in 16-bit color at 800x600. INCOMING's performance dropped off only a few frames per second. OpenGL performance in 16-bit color seems to be the weakest link for the Rage 128. The good news is that an OpenGL driver will ship with the card.

Running tests in MOTORHEAD—which allows you to set a wide variety of parameters, including setting up for 32-bit rendering and using true-color textures (instead of 16-bit textures)—proved interesting. When running in 16-bit mode (with all other rendering features cranked up), the Rage Fury edged ahead of the TNT. Running in full 32-bit glory, the

card still pumped out nearly 25fps at 1280x1024.

I also checked out FALCON 4.0, EUROPEAN AIR WAR and BALDUR'S GATE, a 2D game capable of 32-bit effects. Those titles, at least, seemed pretty solid. However, there were still a few glitches with the driver, like the MOTORHEAD AutoPlay menu crashing upon exiting the game. Overall, though, the drivers seemed fairly well behaved.

The bottom line is that the Rage Fury is a solid performer with today's titles and is well positioned for tomorrow's true-color games. And at \$199 for a whopping 32MB RAM, it's a great deal, too. **CGW**



**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**



**APPEAL:** Gamers looking for a great, all-around graphics accelerator.

**PROS:** Terrific 32-bit performance; lots of RAM, great price

**CONS:** Slower than TNT in 16-bit game 3D.

**REQUIREMENTS:** System with AGP slot, Windows 98.

P. 199 \$199

ATI Rage Fury

www.atitech.com

## PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

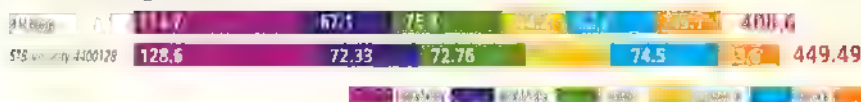
WinBench 99 Business Graphics WinMark (1024x768x32)



3D WinBench 99 (1024x768x16)



3D GameGauge at 800x600



**How We Tested:** Both cards were tested on CGW's reference system, a Pentium II 400MHz system with a 440BX chipset and 128MB RAM.



# No Strings Attached

by Denny Atkin

**Y**ou want to set up a home gaming network, but your PCs are in different rooms, and you don't think your landlord would take kindly to your drilling through the walls to run Ethernet cabling

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**



**APPEAL:** Two-computer households where wiring is impractical

**PROS:** Easily installed; transparent Internet sharing, great for laptops

**CONS:** Sensitive to location; signal may cause speaker buzz

**REQUIREMENTS:** Windows 95/98, available expansion slot

Price: \$199 (two desktop computers), \$229 (desktop and notebook)  
Manufacturer: Diamond Multimedia Corp.  
San Jose, CA (408) 604-1400

www.diamondmin.com

down to the kids' room. Diamond has the solution with Home Free, a wireless network.

Home Free uses 2.4GHz spread-spectrum radio transmissions to network computers almost anywhere within a 150-foot range of each other. It's available in two versions: the Desktop Pac, with one ISA and one PCI network card, and the Combo Pac, with one ISA and one laptop PC Card. Single cards can also be purchased. Installation is a breeze, requiring no knowledge of networking. Network transmissions are encrypted, so you don't have to worry about a Home Free-using neighbor snooping your files.

Home Free transmission is rated at 1Mbit/sec, one tenth the speed of a typical wired Ethernet setup but three times faster than typical electric-socket or phone-line networks. Speed varies depending on the location of the computers and potential interference sources. In

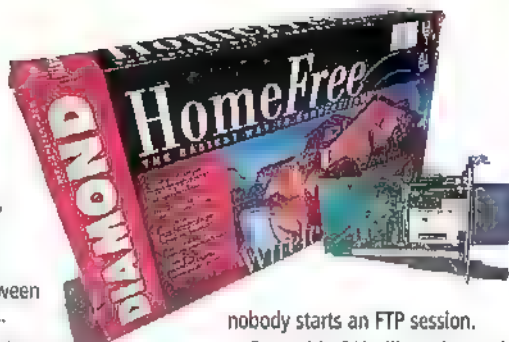
one location, a 2MB file copied in 33 seconds between a Home Free-equipped desktop and a laptop (about 500 Kbit/sec). A third machine, blocked from view of the first by a metal desk, took a whopping 2 minutes 50 seconds to copy the same file. Compare this to less than 4 seconds to copy the file over a 10 BaseT Ethernet network.

You won't want to install large games, but Home Free is plenty fast for most gaming and Web browsing. The most important factor in gaming is ping time, and at 10-14 milliseconds, Home Free provided very smooth play in HALF-LIFE and EUROPEAN AIR WAR. The included Internet sharing software works wonderfully with a cable modem, and it's not bad on a 56-Kbps phone connection as long as

nobody starts an FTP session.

Downsides? You'll need to make sure that all your machines are placed where they get a clear signal. That's not as big a deal when one PC is a laptop, and moving to the other side of the couch may clear things up. A bigger concern is that, while Home Free didn't interfere with cordless phones, its signal was strong enough to cause a quiet background static on my PC's speakers when they were turned up to high volume. (Home Free did disrupt the signal on a Wavecom wireless video transmitter in my house.)

If your home setup is conducive to a wired network, use that. But if cables aren't an option, Home Free provides good performance, and the wireless setup is especially well suited to laptop use. **CGW**



## REVIEW • PLEXTOR ULTRAPLEX 40MAX

# Plextor's Good Vibes

by Loyd Case

**O**ne of the problems with high-speed CD-ROM drives has been vibration. Some CDs, particularly those with elaborate silk-screened labels, tend to

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**



**APPEAL:** Moves data really fast. Quiet for a high speed drive

**PROS:** Fast transfer rate, vibration-free

**CONS:** Access time isn't among the best; pricey in today's market

**REQUIREMENTS:** PC with SCSI host adapter

Price: \$155 (street)  
Manufacturer: Plextor  
Santa Clara, CA (800) 475-3986

www.plextor.com

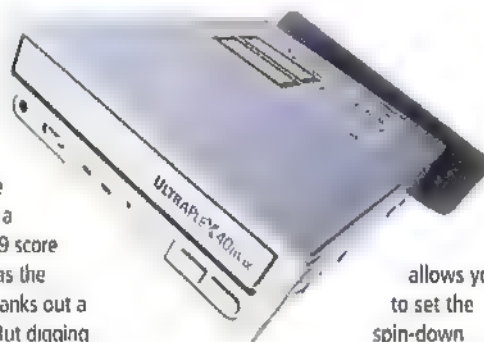
wobble a bit. At high speeds (20x and above), the vibration can become severe enough to be annoying and cause misreads.

Various manufacturers have tried to solve this problem, usually by detecting the vibration condition and slowing the drive down. Plextor, the specialist in high-performance CD-ROM drives, has a better solution. Using a twin, sliding ball-bearing approach, the mechanism in the UltraPlex 40Max actually balances unbalanced CDs as they rotate. Think of it as dynamically adjustable tire weights that keep a tire balanced.

Plextor also makes the 40Max available in either Wide or Ultra-Wide SCSI formats. The Ultra-Wide drive is really nice if you have ultra-wide SCSI drives, because you can minimize your cable connections. At first blush, performance isn't as

good as some IDE CD-ROM drives. The drive generates a CD WinBench 99 score of 1330, whereas the Pioneer 7045 cranks out a score of 1450. But digging deeper, we discover the transfer rate of the Plextor is much higher. This showed in a full installation of BALDUR'S GATE, which takes 2.4GB of disk space and cranks through five CDs. The Plextor finished the install a full CD ahead of the IDE drive. The lower CD WinBench score was probably due to the weighting that CD WinBench gives to access time: The Plextor's average access time is 93ms, a bit slower than many current IDE drives.

The utilities are the best part of this drive. Plextor Manager installs in your system tray and



allows you to set the spin-down time, change the speed of the CD,

and perform digital audio extraction over the SCSI bus. There's also a Windows 9X driver installed that lets you manipulate Redbook (CD) audio data as if they were standard .WAV files—pretty cool stuff.

The bottom line is that if you already have SCSI, then the 40Max is the drive to have. But if your system is IDE-based, you might consider some of the new 5x DVD drives that are coming out. **CGW**

Photo: Michael Fitzmaurice

Photo: Michael Fitzmaurice

# DEMONSTRATION #2:

- 1 Tear out your old sound card.
- 2 Smash into pieces.
- 3 Toss over your shoulder.

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# Show of Force

by Dave Salvator

I know what you're thinking: "Another force-feedback wheel?! Sheesh! Enough already!" But this new wheel from AVB is a little different. No, really. For starters, it uses

**COMPUTER  
GAMING  
WORLD**



**APPEAL:** Casual drivers looking for some force-feedback in their lives.

**PROS:** Solid basic design, straightforward installation, good performance.

**CONS:** Forces feel somewhat weak; no bundled editor; wall-wart power supply.

**REQUIREMENTS:** DOS 5.0 for sound card-only support, Pentium 166 or better with USB and Windows 98.

Price: \$149  
Manufacturer: AVB  
Santa Fe Springs, CA (562) 903-7002

www.avbtech.com

USB to connect to your PC, a first among force-feedback wheels. And unlike most other force-feedback wheels, it has a two-position shifter for gear changing.

The FBW-1 greatly resembles Guillemot's Race Leader wheel, and it appears that both wheels are based on a reference design by Immersion, the company whose I-Force API first brought force-feedback to PC gaming. The two wheels have the same configuration and identical pedals and wall-wart power supply. But unlike Guillemot's offering, the FBW-1 feels solid and renders forces much more realistically. The wheel itself looks a bit like a flight yoke, although you won't get very far driving a plane with this thing.

I went for a spin through *NEED FOR SPEED III*, one of the best force-feedback driving titles to

date, and the FBW-1 rendered most forces well, and the wheel felt good. The same can't be said about the unit's pedals, which are weakly sprung and don't allow for fast switching, something that's critical for braking. But getting back to the wheel, most forces felt pretty good, although the wheel didn't render skids when my car began to slide. Its shifter worked well enough, though I found myself using the two thumb buttons for upshift/downshift. These buttons

are well positioned for shifting, but sometimes wouldn't completely depress, making me miss a shift.

Overall, the FBW-1 is an adequate performer, but there are better wheels to be had—such as Logitech's new Formula Force (which only costs \$30 more than the FBW-1). With better pedals and a few button refinements, the FBW-1 would become a more serious contender. Until then, look before you leap. **CGW**



photo: Michael Falcione

## REVIEW • LOGITECH WINGMAN FORMULA FORCE

# Drive by Wire

by Loyd Case

With its bright red rubber grip, you can't mistake this wheel. Logitech's new Formula Force is another in the seemingly endless series of force-

feedback steering wheels we've seen over the past few months.

Unlike the Microsoft SideWinder wheel, which uses gears in its mechanism and can feel a bit "notchy" as a result, the Formula Force uses wires and pulleys for its internal drive, making for a somewhat smoother feel than the SideWinder.

Setup is pretty easy, though the clamping mechanism requires you to screw down a pair of clamps every time you mount the wheel. The wheel connects either via USB or a normal serial port; we used USB in our testing. Installing the drivers was straightforward, but the Logitech launcher software default setup was for... *QUAKE II*. Yep, just what we all want to do is "drive" the *QUAKE* guy around. Maybe the monsters will get out of our way when we honk the horn.

After resetting the wheel to a "blank" configuration (most Windows driving games allow you to customize the control setup anyway), we booted up *NEED FOR SPEED III* and *SPEEDBUSTERS*. At first, the forces seemed a bit weaker than with the Microsoft wheel. A trip to the game controller control panel allowed us to tweak the forces up to 150 percent(!). At those maximums, the effects came through strongly, but weren't overbearing. The rubber grip of the wheel

proved quite comfortable, but the plastic foot pedals had very little resistance and were hard to use with any precision.

The wheel itself seemed fairly precise, so the car went generally where we wanted. Like all other force-feedback wheels shipped, it will not work with most DOS games.

All in all, if you want a force-feedback wheel that's comfortable, well-mannered, and easy to set up, you can't go wrong with the Formula Force. **CGW**



photo: Michael Falcione

**COMPUTER  
GAMING  
WORLD**



**APPEAL:** Gamers in the market for a smooth-performing wheel.

**PROS:** Very smooth control; good precision, too.

**CONS:** Pedal motions seem coarse; setup software is arcane.

**REQUIREMENTS:** USB port (Windows 98) or free serial port (Windows 95/98).

Price: \$179.95 (MSRP)  
Manufacturer: Logitech  
Fremont, CA (800) 231-7717

www.logitech.com



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Dear Mrs. Johnson,

The melted remains I sent in my last letter were not those of your son. Our condolences. Your son, Joe, is attached above in this little baggie.

Please return the previously sent melted Private at your earliest convenience.

Deepest regrets,

Sarge  
Sarge

P.S. Although there will never be another Joe, you'll be glad to know we're already molding others in his likeness.



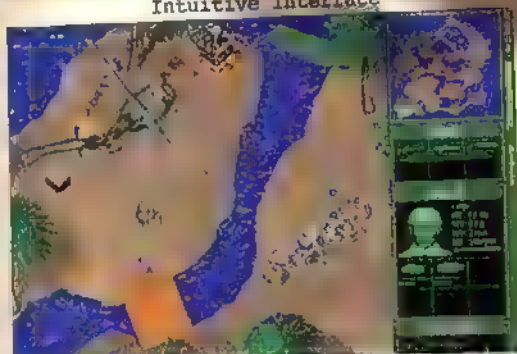
Joe's Unit



The Kitchen Campaigns



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the secret hides.  
the truth consumes.

# Odium

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SOFTWARE HOUSE

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# REVIEWS

CHECK OUT THIS MEGADOSE OF REVIEWS!

## Coasters of the Month

### Extreme Paintbrawl



There's no violence, hence no game.

### Street Fighter 2



Action game that lacks a punch.

### Iron John Hawk



Robert Rly would be embarrassed.

### Newman/Haas Racing



This one skids quickly to a halt.

### Test Drive Off-Road 2



You can't go off-road—Huh?

## This Month CGW Editors' Choice Games Are Indicated in Yellow

Game	Rating	Page
Abe's Exoddus	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	162
After Dark	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	217
Baldur's Gate	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	190
Brunswick Bowling	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	206
Carnageddon 2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	170
Carnivores	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	174
Extreme Paintbrawl	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	176
Falcon 4.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	184
Fatal Abyss	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	177
Fireteam	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	173
Gangsters	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	214
Global Domination	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	183
Glover	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	177
Godzilla Online	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	177
HeadRush	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	217
Iron John Hawk	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	176
King's Quest: Mask of Eternity	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	192
Luftwaffe Commander	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	188
MegaMan 4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	174
Moto Racer 2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	203
Myth II	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	210
NASCAR Pinball	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	174
Newman/Haas Racing	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	205
Powerslide	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	207
Proletaria Deluxe	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	213
Quest for Glory V	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	196
Rainbow 6: Eaglewatch	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	164
Return to Krondor	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	194
Rogue Squadron	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	168
Settlers III	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	216
Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	208
StarCraft: Brood War	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	212
StarCraft: Retribution	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	213
Starsiege Tribes	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	181
Street Fighter Alpha 2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	176
Test Drive 5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	204
Test Drive Off Road	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	205
Uprising 2: Lead and Destroy	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	175
You Don't Know Jack: The Ride	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	217
Zorndorf	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	213

## The Game Genres

**Action** Games that emphasize fast game-play over story or strategy.

**Adventure** Games that require you to solve puzzles to move through a story line.

**Classical/Puzzle** Old standbys such as Chess and MONOPOLY. Puzzle games emphasize problem-solving.

**Role-Playing** These stress character

development through attributes. The game-world tends to be large, the plot less linear.

**Simulations** Highly realistic games from a first-person perspective.

**Sports/Racing** A genre encompassing action sports games, such as NBA LIVE; strategic sports games, such as FPS FOOTBALL, and driving games.

**Strategy** These games emphasize resource and risk-management. Includes conflict-based sci-fi and fantasy games as well as construction programs like SIMCITY.

**Wargames** A subset of strategy games, these re-create historical conflicts from a command perspective. They may be tactical, operational, or strategic.

## How Do We Rate? We review only finished products—no betas, no patches.



**Outstanding** The rare game that gets it all right. A must-play experience.



**Very Good** Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks.



**Average** Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or simply vanilla.



**Weak** Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another clone.



**Abysmal** The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Coaster material.



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... (1991) ...  
... (1991) ...  
... (1991) ...

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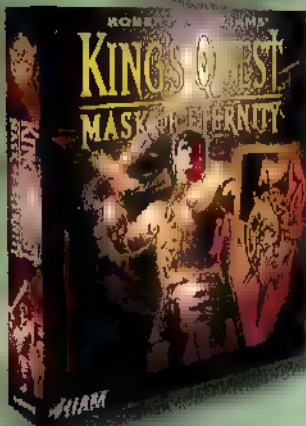
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Adventure Series  
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# CGW Reviews Index *These Are the Games We Have Reviewed in the Past Three Months*

	Game/Publisher	Month	CGW Rating	Game/Publisher	Month	CGW Rating
ACTION	Asteroids Activision	March	★★★★★	Limb from Limb Interplay	March	★★★★★
	Barrage Activision	March	★★★★★	Microsoft Pinball Arcade Microsoft	March	★★★★★
	Big Race USA Empire Interactive	March	★★★★★	Montezuma's Return WizardWorks	March	★★★★★
	Blood II GT Interactive	March	★★★★★	O.D.T. Psynosis	March	★★★★★
	Centipede 3D Hasbro	March	★★★★★	Plane Crazy SegaSoft	February	★★★★★
	Dark Vengeance GT Interactive	March	★★★★★	Quake II: Ground Zero Activision	January	★★★★★
	Delta Force Novalogic	February	★★★★★	Return Fire 2 Ripcord Games	January	★★★★★
	Dethkorf Melbourne House	March	★★★★★	Shogo Monolith Productions	January	★★★★★
	Fighter Pilot Electronic Arts	February	★★★★★	Sin Activision	February	★★★★★
	Fly Hunter Nanotainment	February	★★★★★	Space Bunnies Must Die Ripcord	February	★★★★★
	Future Cop: L.A.P.D. Electronic Arts	March	★★★★★	Spec Ops: Ranger Team Bravo Ripcord	March	★★★★★
	Half-Life Sierra	February	★★★★★	Thief Eidos Interactive	March	★★★★★
	H.E.D.Z. Hasbro	March	★★★★★	Tomb Raider III Eidos Interactive	March	★★★★★
	Heretic II Activision	March	★★★★★	Trespasser: Jurassic Park Electronic Arts	January	★★★★★
	Klingon Honor Guard MicroProse	January	★★★★★	Vigilance SegaSoft	February	★★★★★
ADVENTURE	Blackstone Chronicles Legend/Red Orb	February	★★★★★	Morpheus Piranha Interactive	January	★★★★★
	Fallout II Interplay	February	★★★★★	Rage of Mages Monolith Productions	January	★★★★★
	Grim Fandango LucasArts	February	★★★★★	Redguard Bethesda Softworks	March	★★★★★
	Hexlore Infogrames Entertainment	January	★★★★★	RedJack THQ	March	★★★★★
CLASSICS/PUZZLES	Caesar's Palace Slots Interplay	February	★★★★★	Outburst Hasbro	February	★★★★★
	Clue: Murder at Boddy Mansion Hasbro	February	★★★★★	The Robot Club Soullpeak	March	★★★★★
	Creatures 2 Mindscape	January	★★★★★	Sentinel Returns Psynosis	February	★★★★★
	The Game of Life Hasbro	February	★★★★★	Slingo Hasbro	March	★★★★★
	Hoyle Board Games Sierra	February	★★★★★	Smart Games Challenge 3 Hasbro	March	★★★★★
	Jeopardy Hasbro	February	★★★★★	Star Wars Droidworks LucasArts	February	★★★★★
	Lode Runner 2 GT Interactive	February	★★★★★	Wheel of Fortune Hasbro	March	★★★★★
SIMS	Combat Flight Simulator Microsoft	January	★★★★★	Mig-29 Fulcrum Novalogic	January	★★★★★
	Cyberstrike 2 989 Studios/Simultronics	March	★★★★★	Pro Pilot Dynamix	January	★★★★★
	Descent Free.: Silent Threat Interplay	February	★★★★★	Red Baron 3D Dynamix	February	★★★★★
	European Air War MicroProse	February	★★★★★	WC: Prophecy Gold EA/Origin	February	★★★★★
	F-16 Multrole Fighter Novalogic	January	★★★★★	WWII Fighters Jane's Combat Simulations	March	★★★★★
	Hardway Interplay	February	★★★★★			
SPORTS/DRIVING	Burnout Bethesda	February	★★★★★	NBA Live 99 EA Sports	February	★★★★★
	Deer Hunter II WizardWorks	March	★★★★★	NFL Blitz Midway	March	★★★★★
	FIFA 99 EA Sports	March	★★★★★	NHL 99 EA Sports	February	★★★★★
	Front Office Football Soleismlc Software	January	★★★★★	NCAA Football 99 EA Sports	January	★★★★★
	Grand Prix Legends Sierra Sports	January	★★★★★	Need for Speed III EA Sports	January	★★★★★
	Links LS 1999 Access Software	March	★★★★★	TNN Outdoors Pro Hunter ASC Games	March	★★★★★
	Madden '99 EA Sports	January	★★★★★	VR Baseball 2000 Interplay	February	★★★★★
STRATEGY/WARGAMES	Airborne Empire Interactive	February	★★★★★	Knights & Merchants Interactive Magic	January	★★★★★
	Age of Empires: Rise of Rome Microsoft	January	★★★★★	Lords of Magic Special Ed. Sierra	February	★★★★★
	Axis & Allies Hasbro Interactive	January	★★★★★	Populous: The Beginning Bullfinch	March	★★★★★
	Caesar III Sierra	January	★★★★★	Railroad Tycoon II Gathering of Developers	March	★★★★★
	Dominant Species Red Storm	March	★★★★★	Ruthless.com Red Storm	March	★★★★★
	Enemy Infestation Ripcord	February	★★★★★	War Among the Mohawk Empire Interactive	January	★★★★★
	Entrepreneur: Corp. Exp. Stardock Systems	January	★★★★★	Warhammer 40,000: Chaos GateSSI	March	★★★★★
	KKND 2 GT Affiliates	February	★★★★★	West Front TalonSoft	March	★★★★★



# Abe's Crusade

*Oddworld Inhabitants Cook Up Another Mudokon Treat*

by Elliott Chin

**T**wo years after he burst onto the scene with his reluctant hero act, Mudokon slave-turned-liberator, Abe, has returned in his second adventure: ABE'S EXODUS. In the first game, ABE'S ODDYSEE, Abe shut down Rapture Farms, a factory run by the evil and profit-hungry Glukkons, which not only used his fellow Mudokons as slaves but also used their body parts to make Glukkon food products. In ABE'S EXODUS, Abe is called on to shut down yet another evil Glukkon factory. This time, it's Soulstorm Brewery, which is stealing the bones from an ancient Mudokon burial ground to make Soulstorm brew. Abe's mission in EXODUS is similar to his task in ODDYSEE: Bring down the Glukkon factory



**26 TO GO** Abe's overriding goal is to save as many Mudokons as he can by sending them on their way through magic portals. Counters sprinkled throughout the game indicate your progress.

and free the Mudokons slaves inside, except this time Abe also needs to keep the bones buried and put the disturbed souls to rest.

## A Refresher Course

Fans who are looking for all-new, technically superior sequel will be disappointed. While EXODUS is a bigger and improved version of ODDYSEE, the gameplay is essentially the same.

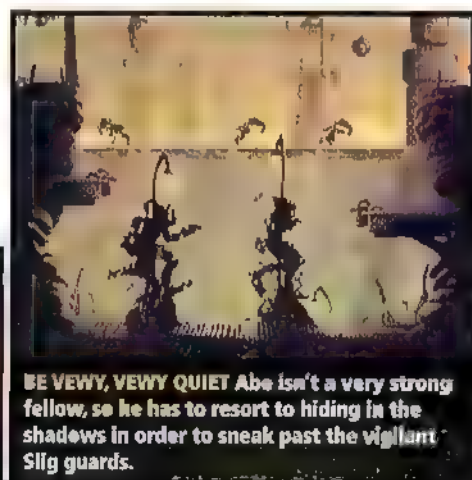
For those new to the series, Abe faces a lot of danger, but never in the most direct way. Although screen after screen is littered with traps, bombs, and hostile creatures, Abe usually dodges, sneaks, and runs his way past these obstacles.

Abe just doesn't have the muscle to directly confront his oppressors. Instead, he accomplishes his goals through trickery and evasion, and by possessing his enemies' bodies. The gameplay consists of many twitch puzzles that will demand timing, patience, and reflexes. The first level of the game starts off very slowly, almost tutorial-style, but once you jump to the jungles

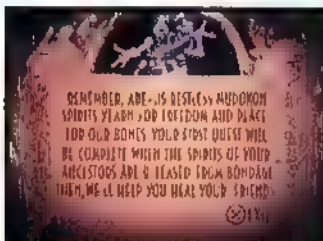
of Necrum, the difficulty ramps up quickly. The pacing is fairly steady, and the game gets only marginally harder at the later levels. The later levels are characterized by more speech and possession puzzles that will challenge you to think of ways to manipulate the possessed.

In EXODUS, Abe retains and expands on his ability to talk to and possess various creatures. The

speech feature in EXODUS, GameSpeak, is an improved version of that in ODDYSEE. GameSpeak allows Abe to talk to his fellow Mudokons. Using his voice of persuasion, Abe can convince his friends to drop their current task and follow him to magical escape portals. Some of the game's most



**BE VEWY, VEWY QUIET** Abe isn't a very strong fellow, so he has to resort to hiding in the shadows in order to sneak past the vigilant Sliig guards.



**HELP US** In ABE'S EXODUS, Abe has been called on to stop the Glukkons of Soulstorm Brewery from digging up old Mudokon bones and using them to make brew.

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** Fans of side-scrolling platformers, ABE'S ODDYSEE fans.

**PROS:** Good sound; nice backgrounds and cut-scenes; innovative speech puzzles and ability to possess enemies.

**CONS:** Gameplay sometimes gets a bit repetitive; characters look muddy; save feature has a bug

**DIFFICULTY:** Advanced.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166, Windows 95/98, 16MB RAM, 32MB hard-drive space, 2MB video card, 4x CD-ROM drive

**3D SUPPORT:** None.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** None.

Price \$49.99

Publisher: GT Interactive  
New York, NY  
(800) 610-1817

www.oddworld.com



challenging puzzles involve figuring out how to maneuver batches of blind Mudokons through an array of dangerous traps and monsters to safety, especially since Abe has no means of directly engaging hostile creatures. One new ability Abe has acquired is the fart. Yes, he can now expel and detonate his flatulence with deadly results.

In addition to speaking to his Mudokon compatriots, Abe can possess nearly all the game's major creatures, from lowly Slig grunts to enemy Glukkon rulers. Once Abe possesses an enemy, he can speak through his puppets to trick other enemy creatures, unlock doors, and activate equipment. This ability is built into numerous puzzles and is definitely not just a gimmick.

Abe again faces off against Slig guards and their Glukkon masters. Other enemies he meets along the way are the doglike Slogs and Sloggies; the ravenous and sluglike Fleeches; the robotic Greeters; vicious Scrabs; and the small but deadly Paramites. In addition to the healthy Mudokons from the previous game, EXODDUS also features depressed, angry, sick, and blind Mudokons. These guys need special treatment, whether it's a kind embrace or a slap in the face, before they can be persuaded to jump through a portal.

### Odd Occurrences

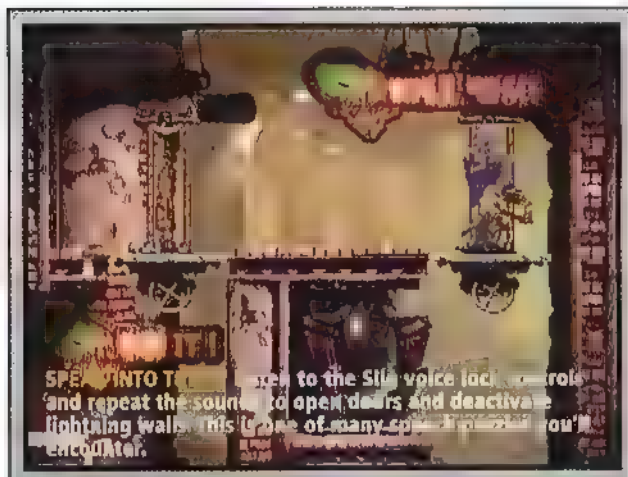
The biggest shortcoming in ABE'S ODDYSEE was its limited save

feature. The designers, Oddworld Inhabitants, have remedied this in EXODDUS by completely revising the save feature so you can save anywhere in the game. There is also a quick-save function that reloads the game at the last quick-save position after you die. However, I did find a problem with the new save function. Although you can save anytime you want, past a certain point, the load screen will stop displaying your most recent saved games. The game either should have alerted you when you ran out of display space or otherwise simply displayed all saved games properly.

EXODDUS doesn't really suffer from any other problems, except for some extremely difficult levels and the inherent shortcoming of platform games: repetitive gameplay. EXODDUS alleviates this problem to a sizeable degree with the speech and possession puzzles, but many times you'll still have to resort to the "die and reload" technique of gameplay.

Sound in EXODDUS is top-notch, with dynamic music that changes depending on the action. If you get caught sneaking past a guard, the music suddenly picks up. The sound effects are also terrific and the voices for the speaking enemies have real personality.

Abe's graphics are good and bad. The few cut-scenes are gorgeous and the prerendered 2D backgrounds are beautiful and full



### Able Advice

- Sligs follow orders, so when disarming Slig voice locks, just copy the voice of the machine. If it laughs, you laugh. Follow it correctly, and the door, lighting bolt, or other obstacle will be lifted.
- If you're using a Glukkon voice lock though, remember that Glukkons don't "follow" anything. If they say "do it," chances are good whatever the task or obstacle, it will get done.
- Disarming bombs is tough, so use not only the visual cue of the blinking light, but also the audio cue of the beep the bomb makes. Each beep coincides with the green light, and it's much easier to disarm the bomb by listening for the audio cue and tapping the bomb in tune with

the beep, rather than trying to synchronize the blinking and your tap.

• The floating metal orbs prevent Abe from chanting. Chant too often and the orbs will hurl lightning bolts at you that will eventually kill you. However, they can be destroyed with exploding farts and the bombs of flying sligs.

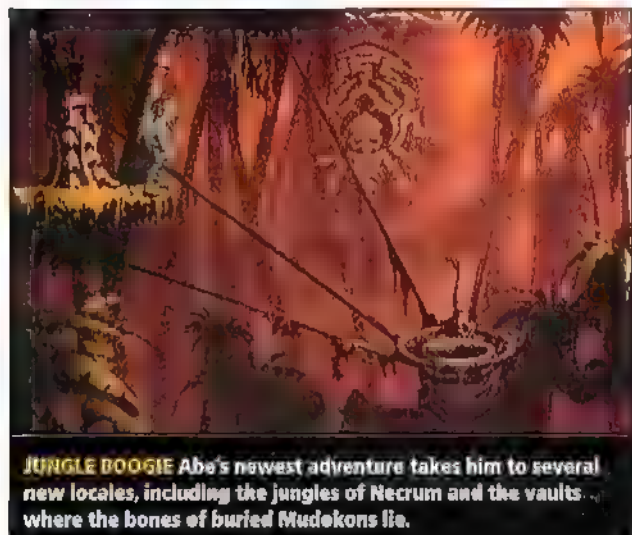
• In many levels, you'll have to be able to go into a roll immediately, so practice running and hitting the roll button (X on the keyboard, or button 2 on the gamepad). Remember that with the run and roll (unlike the normal roll, in which you start from a standing position), once you clear the tunnel or low ceiling you are rolling through, you pop back up into running position.

of style. However, the characters themselves are muddy and sometimes blocky. The characters' graphics just aren't of the same quality as their animations, which are very lifelike and fluid. Considering that it has been more than a year since ABE'S ODDYSEE, Abe and his supporting cast should look better in this game. Unfortunately, the engine appears to be the same one used in ODDYSEE, with little improvement.

In most respects, ABE'S EXODDUS is a good game. However, it's more a continuation of ABE'S ODDYSEE than it is a full-fledged sequel. It has some innovative gameplay and a very stylized look, but nothing that fans of the original won't have already seen. I really enjoyed

the personality of the game's various creatures, especially the Glukkons, as well as the game's overall art style. However, many times during the game, I saw EXODDUS for what it really is: a smart platformer, with all the pluses and minuses that genre implies. Those who appreciate twitch puzzles and the repetitive "die-reload" gameplay inherent in platformers will find an enjoyable game. Others lured by the promise of a live world and truly interactive characters had best wait for the next Oddworld adventure. **BCW**

As previews editor at GameSpot ([www.gamespot.com](http://www.gamespot.com)) Elliott Chin knows a lot about working in an Oddworld.



**JUNGLE DOOGIE** Abe's newest adventure takes him to several new locales, including the jungles of Necrum and the vaults where the bones of buried Mudokons lie.





# Mission Accomplished

*EAGLE WATCH Discovers Gold at RAINBOW's End*

by Raphael Liberatore

If nothing else, the **EAGLE WATCH** expansion pack finally squashes the infestation of bugs in **RAINBOW SIX** (R6). That alone should make it attractive to R6 fans, but the disc also includes new missions, more weapons, more operatives, more multiplayer features, and an observation mode. Everything about the mission pack has vastly improved the original, AI included, making R6 the standout title it deserves to be.

## World Tour

**EAGLE WATCH** adds two more kill houses to an already fantastic array of training environments. Stopping by the tutorial before "zero hour" is a great way to shake off the rust, hone your skills, or test some of the newer

weapons and operatives. Playing the large city map, I quickly discovered how rusty I had gotten by my constant clicking on the retry button. These new kill houses pose more of a challenge than previous R6 training exercises.

The mission pack adds three new weapons to an already good arsenal. There's the potent HKG36K (5.56mm), the highly accurate HKG3A3 (7.62mm), and the overbearing Desert Eagle .50 caliber pistol. In assessing the entire R6 arsenal, only the Desert Eagle and HKG3A3 pack the wallop to pierce body armor in one shot—very important in missions where you can't get a clean shot to the head. The HKG3A3 makes a good long range weapon for sniping.

Four new operatives are added to the pool, drawn from U.S. Army Special Forces and Delta Force, French Service 7, British SAS, and the German GSG-9.

Five new missions take place in five real-world locations. The first operation begins with an intense hostage rescue crisis inside a secret Russian space docking station. You and your team will also visit Big Ben and the House of Parliament in London, China's Forbidden City, the Taj Mahal, and the U.S. Capitol

building. Nicely rendered, all five locations feel as if you are actually there. Some locations have moving parts (Big Ben) and shattering glass



**INSIDE OUTSIDE** Missions taking place in real-world locales like the U.S. Capitol (top) and a Russian space shuttle provide plenty of planning opportunities.

those tacticians more interested in planning than shooting.

The best feature of **EAGLE WATCH** is the enhanced multiplayer value. Several new games have been added to an already good cast of multiplayer games, and

they're easier to set up than before. There's Assassin, where you waste the opponent's general; several Scatter games where your team members begin the game at different insertion points; Save the Base, in which teams try to diffuse bombs; plus many more—all in team play, co-op, and single-play modes.

## The Latest and Greatest

**RAINBOW SIX MISSION PACK: EAGLE WATCH** updates your old version of **RAINBOW SIX** to the latest version, 1.04. Aside from improved stability, the AI has seen the most

revision. Now terrorists and commandos perform like real combatants, with tangles shooting first and asking questions later, and operatives killing terrorists before getting killed themselves. This improved AI really adds to the overall gaming experience. Red Storm also added an observer mode for

those tacticians more interested in planning than shooting. The best feature of **EAGLE WATCH** is the enhanced multiplayer value. Several new games have been added to an already good cast of multiplayer games, and they're easier to set up than before. There's Assassin, where you waste the opponent's general; several Scatter games where your team members begin the game at different insertion points; Save the Base, in which teams try to diffuse bombs; plus many more—all in team play, co-op, and single-play modes.

Don't worry about getting killed too quickly though, you can still watch the game through other player's alter egos. With added weapons, more multiplayer games, and improved stability, **EAGLE WATCH** is arguably one of the better multiplayer shooters available.

**EAGLE WATCH** is a must-have for any R6 fan. Moreover, its additions evolve **RAINBOW SIX** into a real benchmark game. **CGW**

*Raphael Liberatore is a former U.S. Army Special Forces soldier who is currently playing MYTH II nonstop online*

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**



**APPEAL:** RAINBOW SIX fans, military buffs.

**PROS:** New weapons/operatives; better performance; great maps.

**CONS:** Can't reset mouse speed; only live new missions, clipping problems.

**DIFFICULTY:** Advanced.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Windows 95/98, Pentium 166, 16MB RAM, 100MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, 16-bit SVGA video, sound card, 28.8 modem for TCP/IP play.

**3D SUPPORT:** Direct3D, nVidia, RIVA, 3Dfx.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** LAN, Internet (2-32 players, up to 64 in Voyeur Mode).

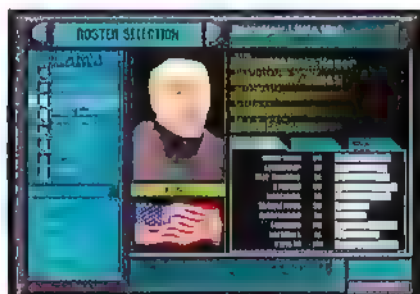
Price \$29.95

Publisher: Red Storm Entertainment

Morrisville, NC

(919) 460-1776

www.redstorm.com

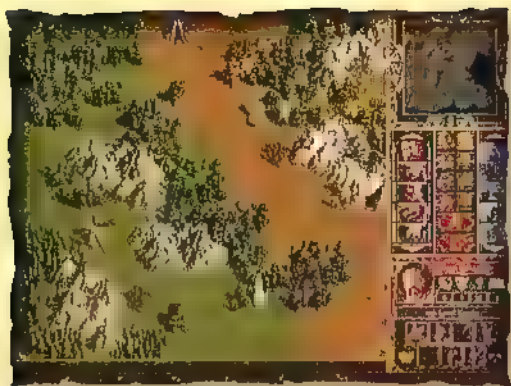


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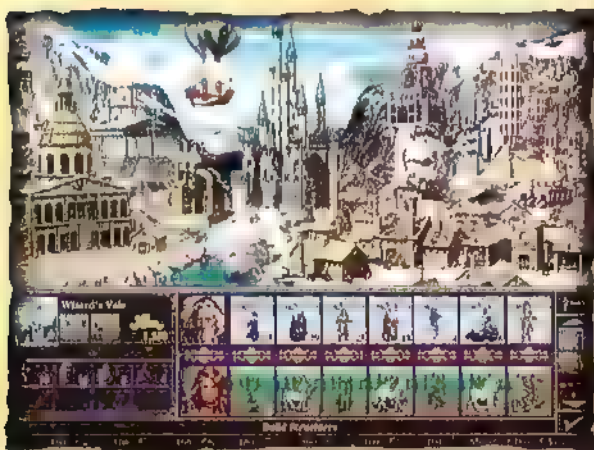


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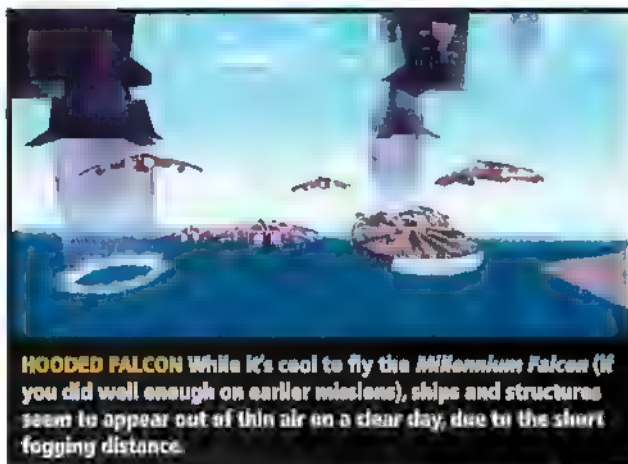
LucasArts' Arcade Shooter Hampered by N64 Legacy

by Thierry Nguyen

**R**emember the first time you saw the destruction of the Death Star? LucasArts' ROGUE SQUADRON tries to capture that experience and the sheer thrill of flying an X-Wing and shooting up enemy TIEs. It does a decent job, but it's held back by limitations stemming from its console roots.

## Red-Five Reporting In

Make no mistake, ROGUE SQUADRON is an action-arcade game. Even though you're flying some famous Rebel craft, this is exactly like SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE, not X-WING or TIE FIGHTER. The premise is that you're Luke Skywalker, and the Death Star has just been destroyed. Since it's a few years before the next movie, you form Rogue Squadron (with all



**HOODED FALCON** While it's cool to fly the *Millennium Falcon* (if you did well enough on earlier missions), ships and structures seem to appear out of thin air on a clear day, due to the short fogging distance.

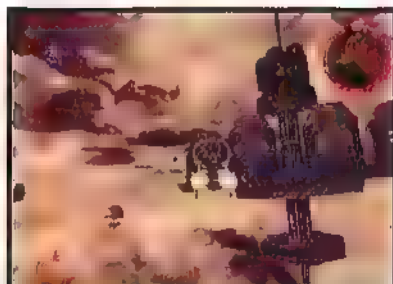
the cool pilots in the Rebellion) and go off on various adventures, which take up 16 game levels.

SHADOWS vets will immediately recognize ROGUE SQUADRON's primarily third-person action (there is a first-person view, but it's not very effective). You're slung behind your ship of choice, flying around and constantly firing at enemy fighters. The objective-based missions ask

you to do things like escort a rescue ship or destroy specific shield generators. Throughout the game, you'll gain medals, power-ups, and access to new technology and ships. You earn medals based on your performance, and you'll need to earn a gold medal on each mission to unlock secret craft or levels. This adds replay value, as you may need to use a newer ship to redo

the old mission and get the commendation.

The game requires a 3D card, and it shows. The textures for the individual ships are the most detailed in any *Star Wars* game, showing off details such as the rivets



**HEY, YOU, GET OFFA MY CLOUD!** ROGUE SQUADRON has a nice variety of environments to fly in, from the Cloud City-style skies of Talarann to the sandy dunes of Tatooine.



**MAKING THE KESSEL RUN** Not only are the environments well done, but the ships are also much more detailed than in previous games.

along your wings, or the light effects from your engines. Environmental details are also very cool: Dust clouds kick up when you skim a planet's surface and your blasters create ripples when fired into water.

## I Am...Your Father

ROGUE SQUADRON is a fun little game, but its problems stem from its N64 heritage. The N64 is less powerful than a good PC, and its fogging distance is short. The PC version of ROGUE SQUADRON seems to have increased the distance, but it's still too short for me. Structures sometimes appear out of thin air. Also, the character sprites are not very detailed.

Contrary to the usual LucasArts standards, the sounds also aren't very inspiring. Instead of the fully juiced laser blasts, we get tinny little bleeps that seem to be another N64 leftover. Even with high-fidelity, voice-overs sound as if they're coming through a phone.

Finally, some gamers may be annoyed with "lives." I don't mind not saving; I expect that in an arcade shooter. But to make the player have to start a level after crashing three times? I got a bit annoyed when I was stuck at one point, and I kept having to replay much of the level when my lives ran out.

All in all, ROGUE SQUADRON is an enjoyable action-arcade game. Just be aware it is very much a child of the N64. **CGW**

Thierry "Scooter" Nguyen wasn't born when *Star Wars* premiered, but that doesn't mean he can't be a fan. While avoiding pointless "Star Wars vs. Star Trek" debates, he plays KING'S QUEST: MASK OF ETERNITY and HALF-LIFE (still).

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

★★★★★

**APPEAL:** Fans of SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE, action-arcade gamers who like *Star Wars*.

**PROS:** Great detail on ship and environment graphics; good incentive for replay; easy to get into.

**CONS:** Fogging distance too short; low-quality sound; console-saving system.

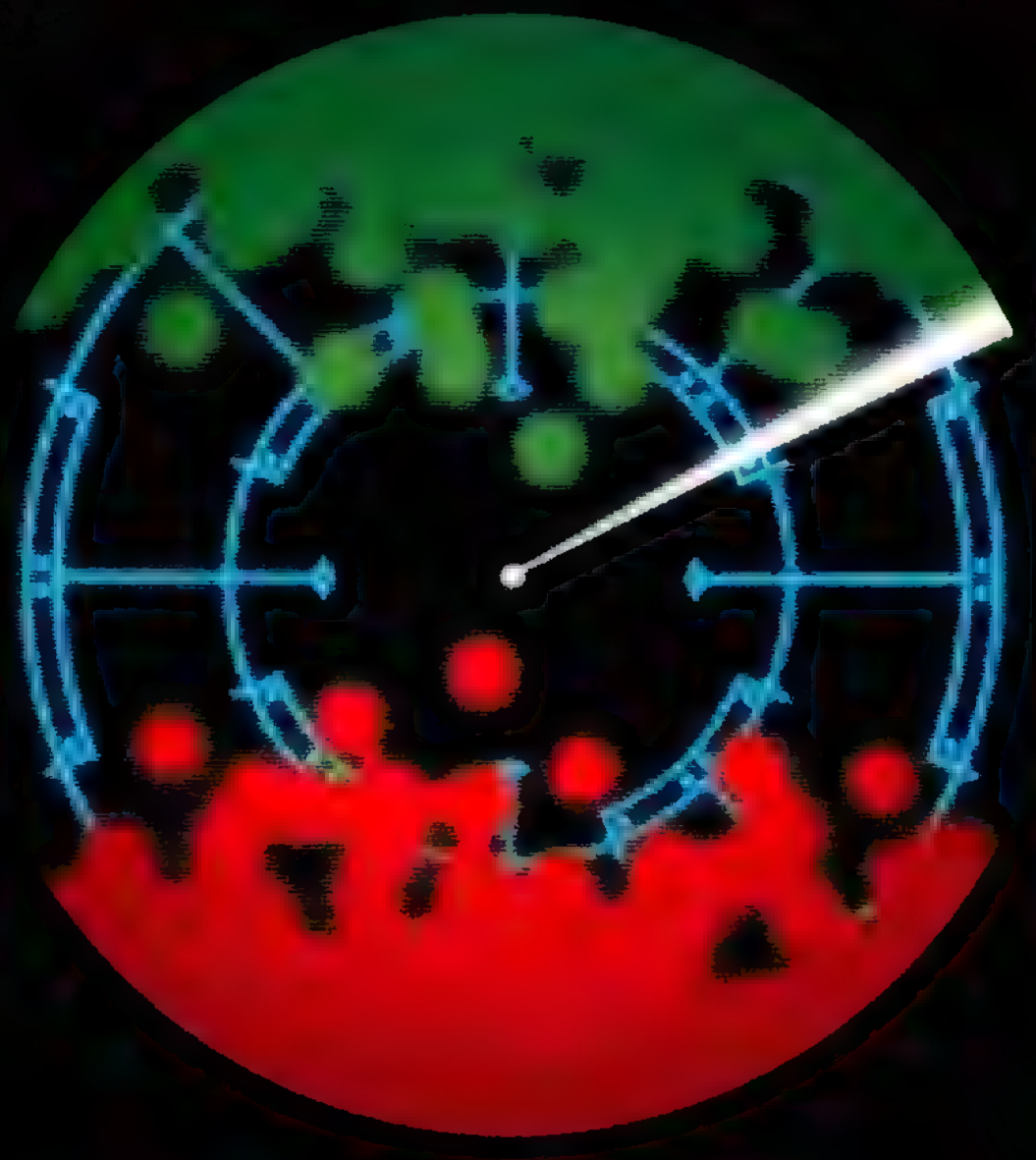
**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166, Windows 95, 32MB RAM, 60MB hard drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, DirectX6-compatible sound and video cards, 3D-accelerator card.

**3D SUPPORT:** Direct3D, 3Dfx Glide.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** None.

Price: \$49.95  
Publisher: LucasArts  
San Rafael, CA  
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# Maim Street, USA

Fill Your Tank With Fountains of Guts in CARMAGEDDON 2

by Ken Brown

**H**ere's the perfect game with which to unleash your inner sadist. The sequel to the blood-soaked racer with the heavy metal soundtrack offers even more mayhem to the mile. If you don't care for crude, violent, and socially unacceptable games, steer clear. But if you want to switch off reality and become a homicidal maniac for a while, get in.

CARMAGEDDON 2 is entirely in 3D. Not only are the cars convincingly detailed, but now the pedestrians are as well. The 2D sprites of the first game have been replaced with 3D figures of a variety of different targets: people, dogs, sheep, even wildlife. As you'd expect, they can be mutilated in a multitude of ways: dismemberment, pinwheeled through the air, decapitated, or



simply turned to mush. If you back over them (not that I would do such a horrible thing), fountains of blood spurt from their broken bodies, accompanied by appropriately disgusting squirming noises.

To justify this deviant behavior, you earn points for nailing your

the course and having the fastest speed or by taking out the other five lunatics racing against you. The default Eagle 3 makes a good battering ram, but those bonus points come in handy for buying more exotic vehicles.

Not all the bonus points require

## Rough Running

CARMAGEDDON 2 may be only a one-joke game, but it isn't bad. It's entertaining and it delivers as promised. But there were a few annoying problems, particularly with the controls, that detracted from the game. A gamepad doesn't offer fine enough control, and it was murder on my D-pad thumb. In addition, my car spun out much too frequently—even at slower speeds—from slight steering input.

Another problem I had was with the automatic panning. After you crash or spin out, the viewing perspective changes to focus on the car, not forward view. It takes a few seconds for the view to then change back toward the front. I got used to it after a while, but the delay is an awkward annoyance.

Finally, the game's linear mission structure means it's easy for someone to get stuck during one of the game's timed missions. The game

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



### APPEAL:

Psychopaths, action racing fans, FPS killers looking for a different fix

**PROS:** Smashing good fun; Iron Maiden soundtrack; good graphics, unabashed gore.

**CONS:** Annoying registration screens; screwy control; slow automatic panning; repetitive sound effects and gameplay.

**DIFFICULTY:** Easy.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 200, Windows 95/98, 16MB RAM, 200MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, DirectX6-compatible sound card.

**3D SUPPORT:** 3Dfx Voodoo2

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** IPX LAN only (2-8 players), 1 CD per player.

Price: \$49.95

Publisher: Interplay  
Irvine, CA  
(800) INTERPLAY

www.interplay.com



## Hit & Run



In the game of CARMAGEDDON 2, there are drivers and there are victims.

victims, the more spectacularly the better. Extra points are awarded for pile-driving pedestrians at high speed, hitting two or three at once, and killing with gusto and verve.

You'll need all the points you can get, because you can repair your car anytime, but it's not free. You can also upgrade your vehicle's armor, power, and offensive capability, which you'll find necessary for advancement. The game's linear mission structure requires that you complete a timed mission after each group of races to win. You can win the races by following

a human sacrifice. The game provides ample power-ups throughout every level. In addition to offering extra points, power-ups can change the look or properties of the pedestrians, or they can affect your car in wildly unpredictable ways. The pedestrians suddenly start dancing or turn into freaks, or your car might start zapping them with bolts of electricity. Other power-ups give you jumping ability or send your car careening over the landscape in "pinball" mode, bouncing off the hills to the accompaniment of pinball sounds.

isn't all that hard, but when someone gets stuck it lessens the chance they'll continue to play. There are better games to spend time solving.

All in all, CARMAGEDDON 2 has the horsepower and the looks to deliver a nice joyride. But control issues and repetitiveness mean that your ride will likely be a short one. **C-+**

*Ken Brown is the executive editor of CGW. He is incapable of playing any driving game without trying to run over pedestrians.*

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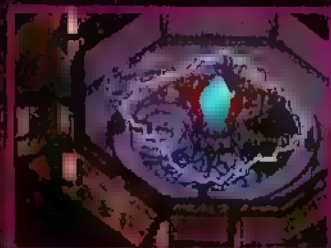
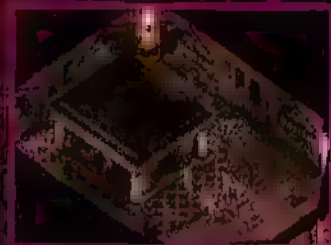
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# Burnt out on the standard RPG?

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# Company Man

*FIRETEAM's Voice Technology Brings Team Play to the Online World*

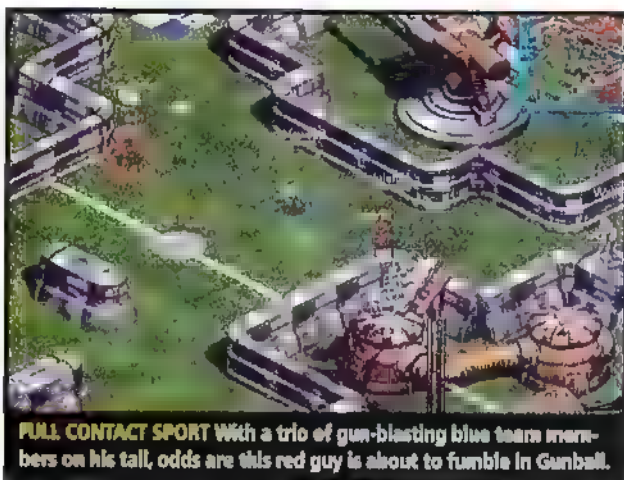
by Lance A. Larka

All the multiplayer cooperative games I've played have had one failing—a lack of communication. I've always found that getting your brilliant strategy across (or even a call for help) to your friends was a hassle and took too long—until I played FIRETEAM.

FIRETEAM is an online-only game that can be played with 2–12 players comprising up to three teams that compete in four different types of games. Visually, game-play is a combination of CRUSADER and DIABLO with a hint of *The Running Man* thrown in for atmosphere. "So what?" you say. "What makes this action game so great?"

## You Said It!

One word: speech. Not some synthesized robo-voice, but honest-



**FULL CONTACT SPORT** With a trio of gun-blasting blue team members on his tail, odds are this red guy is about to fumble in Gunball.

to-God real human speech. The game comes with a custom-built, hands-free, stereo headset/microphone that plugs directly into your sound card and allows you to talk to, and hear back from, your teammates during the game. No more fumbling with text boxes, no more dying under enfilade fire while trying to type your plight to your teammates, no struggling to cancel a half-typed message after being surprised by a foe. No more excuses for failing to use teamwork either. The radio headset may be an unabashed gimmick, but it actually aids and improves gameplay.

You play as one of three different types of soldiers. The lightly

armored Scout is fast, bristles with sensors, and carries a machine pistol that fairly chews enemies apart at point-blank range. The Commando carries decent body armor, a standard sensor suite, and a sniper rifle that does extra damage when you take the time to aim properly. The Heavy Gunner is slow, massively armored, almost blind, but carries an area-effect blast cannon that reaches out and touches everyone in front of it, friend and foe alike.

There are four 10-minute mission styles to play, each with its own appeal and following. Deathmatch mode is pretty similar to what you're used to, but it has an interesting twist

during the last few minutes of the match—you get a limited number of lives based on how many kills you achieved in the first phase. Gunball is a football/soccer

combo; Flags is a capture the flag game where kills don't get you any points; and Basetag is an exercise in the control of territory where you must protect your base while tagging the other team's base. The game features a great number of maps that include twisting warrens, gleaming galleries, and clear corridors. No matter what your tastes, you'll find a map to your liking.

Game setup is painless using FIRETEAM's lobby system. Through a series of simple windows you choose your game type, map, and number of teams and players. I was impressed by the online support. There was always at least one technical-support player per lobby on-hand to answer questions and give hints to new players.

## Welcome to the Club

FIRETEAM has generated an extensive online community, complete with individualized gamer-formed companies, each with a name, icon, and group statistics. Company Web pages are provided free by Multitude, and stats (both team and individual) are immediately updated and easily accessible.

Like any online game, a lot of enjoyment hinges on the people you play with. My chief complaint about FIRETEAM is the lack of available movement options. You can only jog, turn, kneel, and sidestep. I was aching to do a forward dive into the endzone or execute a quick roll from behind cover more times than I can count. But this isn't going to keep me from playing.

FIRETEAM isn't the greatest or most exciting thing I've put on my hard drive of late, but it's undeniably a good time. **CGW**

*Tumbleweed (a.k.a. Lance A. Larka) is trying to keep up with his Company's stats, and do the Undead proud.*



**PLAYING DEFENSE** Who needs a goalie when you can cover the goal with guns?

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

★★★★★

**APPEAL:** Team players who want to play in a good, stable online environment.

**PROS:** Real-time voice communication; interesting games; a wealth of maps; great online support.

**CONS:** Not enough movement options, nothing new in game types.

**DIFFICULTY:** Easy

**REQUIREMENTS:** Windows 95/98, Pentium 166, 32MB RAM, 254MB hard-drive space, 28.8 modem, Internet connection.

**3D SUPPORT:** None.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** Internet only (2–12 players).

Price: \$59.95  
Publisher: Multitude  
Burlingame, CA  
(888) 689-TEAM  
[www.fireteam.com](http://www.fireteam.com)



# Shooting Gallery

Fire Away at Dinos, Targets, and Pixelated Bosses in These Action Titles.



## Carnivores



Publisher: Wizard Works  
Price: \$19.99  
[www.wizworks.com](http://www.wizworks.com)

Even if you don't "get" hunting games, you'll get **CARNIVORES**. City boys like me don't see the appeal in taking out squirrels with shotguns or doe-eyed mammals with high-powered rifles. But who wouldn't get a thrill out of stalking velociraptors with a crossbow or trying to tranquilize a rampaging T-Rex?

**CARNIVORES** is not only a hunting game for nonhunters, but it's also a pretty convincing menagerie of everybody's favorite terrible lizards. The meat-eaters are fast, brutal, and aggressive, while the veggie-eating dinosaurs are cautious and timid. Furthermore, they live in beautiful and convincing environments. The prevailing wind blows clouds across the sun and dapples the landscape in light and shadow. Animals rustle through the leaves and Pterodactyls wheel overhead in slow lazy circles.

The actual gameplay can get a bit tedious if you're not into hunting sims. Although **CARNIVORES** is not equipment intensive, there are a few toys to make the game easi-

er. This is clearly a game about stalking rather than action; patience is the order of the day. But it ramps up nicely as you bag trophies to unlock new maps and prey. And certainly gamers will appreciate the irony that this modest member of GT's line of budget games is ultimately far better than a certain other big-budget dinosaur game which need not be named (let's just say it rhymes with "mess-passer").—*Tom Chick*

## 3D Ultra NASCAR Pinball



Publisher: Sierra On-Line  
Price: \$29.95  
[www.nascarpinball.com](http://www.nascarpinball.com)

It's not conventional pinball and it certainly isn't stock-car racing. Nevertheless, steeped with enough stock-car images and animations to almost convince you

that you're controlling a race with your flippers, **3D ULTRA NASCAR PINBALL** corners the market on cute and should make light but enjoyable fare for pinball-loving racers with very little time on their hands—a niche market to be sure.

Starting on "The Garage" table, set amidst mechanic's tools and all the trappings of a NASCAR setup facility, you attempt to hit targets that improve your car's performance for the upcoming race. You'll then graduate to the logo-filled "Speedway," in which ramps are named after the four turns on a standard NASCAR oval and a pseudo-race does indeed take place around the table's perimeter as you play. Fit in one or two visits to "The Pit," where nailing lighted targets will equip you with a new set of tires faster than you can say "Jeff Gordon is a candy-ass northerner," and you're done.

Along the way, crew chiefs advise ("Head to the pit,"), announcers commentate ("There's a big wreck on the infield,"), and items such as flags, tires, and oil drums sporadically flit about the table waiting to be crushed. There's not a lot of depth here to be sure and the game was never intended as a convincing representation of an analog ball and table, but as a short-term novelty, it's reasonable entertainment.—*Gordon Goble*



## Megaman X4



Publisher: Capcom  
Price: \$34.95  
[www.capcom.com](http://www.capcom.com)

The newest installment of the legendary console series, **MEGAMAN**

**X4** follows the same basic formula as the older **MEGAMAN** titles with a few exceptions. It's still your standard platformer, but the **MEGAMAN** formula is spiced up a bit with some vehicles and some indispensable rocket boots. The most significant change is the ability to play as either the little blue dude himself, or his robot pal Zero.

We still have the nonlinear, selectable stages, each with its own unique boss and weapon to acquire (Zero acquires new moves).



As the game goes on, this adds a bit more complexity, although you still end up simply tapping the fire button as fast you can for a good 30 minutes to beat the big bosses.

**MEGAMAN** is huge in Japan, so there's plenty of weird Japanese flavor. Bosses with names like Split Mushroom, Magma Dragoon, and Frost Walrus (I swear I saw them open for Soundgarden once); weird anime cut-scenes; and badly translated text might turn some people off, but they provide the goofy atmosphere needed to appreciate this game.

The extremely dated graphics are quaint, but what's the point of releasing a game now with graphics circa 1989?

The appeal of this game is really limited to hard-core platformer freaks and **MEGAMAN** fans and most of them probably bought the console version when it came out over a year ago. Core computer gamers aren't going to find this game worth their time.—*Tom Price*

# Mech Mine DNA

*This Cult Favorite Follow-up Is a Feast for the Senses*

by Scott A. May

**T**he history of 3DO is that of a company buoyed by innovation but nearly sunk by misfires and marketing blunders. Though the tendency is to focus on mistakes, 3DO has had its moments of brilliance,

such as 1997's *UPRISING*, one of the first games to combine real-time strategy with intense first-person action. Though the title generated plenty of critical hyperbole, it was ignored by much of the gaming public. Hey, it happens all the time.

But take heart, faithful followers, because redemption is at hand, in the guise of *UPRISING 2: LEAD AND DESTROY*, an excellent follow-up to the original *UPRISING*. Produced by 3DO's in-house development team, Cyclone Studios, *UPRISING 2* features a greatly enhanced graphics engine, more balanced gameplay,



**MAKE 'EM GLOW** A New Alliance bomber unleashes an attack on a Trich stronghold. Notice the stunning sky effects.

challenging enemy AI, and a built-in level editor. If you missed the original, here's your second chance for glory; if you loved it the first time, the sequel will blow you away.

## Trich or Treat

In *UPRISING*, players fought their misguided brethren in a revolt against Imperium oppression and

eventually earned their freedom. In *UPRISING 2*, you must gather your New Alliance forces to ward off an attacking race of aliens known as the Trich. These ravenous lizard-like creatures are driven by only two goals: conquer all opposing species and harvest their DNA. As if that's not enough, you must also contend with Cormeerans, a splinter group

still loyal to the Imperium, as well as the Androkulans, a slave race employed by the Trichs. Okay, so it's not the most unique premise in the gaming kingdom, but it's superbly fleshed out, thanks to Cyclone's improved story structure and engrossing campaign development.

Rookies would be wise to first enter the multipart training missions, designed to familiarize them with move-

ment and combat controls, unit deployment and commands, battle-field power-ups, and friendly and enemy units. Returning players can jump right into the tightly structured campaign games, or test their mettle in one of dozens of individual scenarios, each rated by difficulty. Unlike in the original, campaigns here unfold in linear fashion, accompanied by an above-average branching storyline and

hidden missions. The game also features a broad range of competitive or cooperative multiplayer options, including low-lag Internet play on MPlayer and HEAT.net.

Gameplay involves commanding a variety of land and air forces to drive the Trich from your home turf and far beyond—all the way back to the devils' homeland, if you make it that far. You do your commanding from a Wrath hovertank, researching power-ups, weapons, and vehicle upgrades as you progress. Like any level-based game, the going gets extremely tough in the later stages, though this game is nowhere near as difficult as the original. Partial credit goes to *UPRISING 2*'s straightforward controls, revamped HUD, and recon satellite interface. This zoomable overhead map is invaluable for plotting strategic moves and troop deployment, as well as for unit identification.

## Looks That Kill

Cyclone spared nothing in the graphic redesign of *UPRISING 2*. The cinematic cut-scenes are amazing, as are the photorealistic sky effects. Weapon effects are killer, such as the new Energy Disruptor and Death Shroud. Much time was also spent remodeling the game's abundance of high-tech gear, including the Trich's dark, menacing appearance and lethal arsenal.

Taken only as a first-person shooter or an RTS contest, *UPRISING 2* is merely good. But the sum of these parts comes together so well, what emerges is significantly better, if not much different than the first game. Cyclone has found struck a good balance between depth and ease of play, resulting in an addicting sci-fi experience. **CGW**

*Scott A. May currently finds himself puzzling over JOHN SAUL'S BLACKSTONE CHRONICLES.*

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** Veteran and wannabe mech warriors.

**PROS:** Adjustable difficulty; scenario editor; high-res 3D graphics.

**CONS:** Visuals are often too dark; unit IDs a problem in battle; too much online documentation.

**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166, Win 95/98, 32MB RAM, 46MB hard-drive space, 2MB DirectX-compatible video card, DirectX-compatible sound cards.

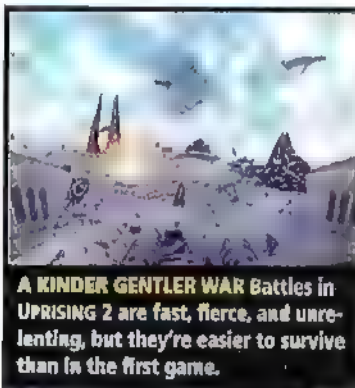
**3D SUPPORT:** DirectX5 or greater, 3Dfx (supports Voodoo2 SLI).

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** LAN or Internet (2-8 players), modem or serial link (2 players).

Price: \$49.95

Publisher: The 3DO Company  
Redwood City, CA 94063  
(800) 336-3506

www.3do.com



**A KINDER GENTLER WAR** Battles in *UPRISING 2* are fast, fierce, and unrelenting, but they're easier to survive than in the first game.

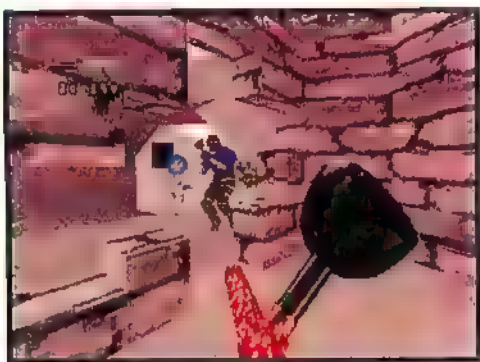


**GUN FIGHTER** In this scenario, your Wrath hovertank prepares to engage a massive Trich laser turret. You'll need to act fast or be vaporized.



# Use at Your Own Risk

*Scraping the Bottom of the Barrel in Action Gaming*



## Extreme Paintbrawl

★☆☆☆☆  
Publisher: Head Games  
Price: \$29.99  
[www.headgames.com](http://www.headgames.com)

**E**XTRME PAINTBRAWL is a shooter with buggy performance, bad AI, DOS networking, and lame action. Touted as the 1st non-violent 3D shooter, actually playing this game will drive even the meekest of pacifists into extreme acts of violence.

EXTRME PAINTBRAWL allows you to recruit, equip, and supply your own team for combat on five unique battlefields. First, you'll head over to the supply shack in order to equip your eight players with real world paintball markers, from Sheridan pump pistols to the coveted VM-68 Sniper Rifle. Unfortunately, supplying your team is a tedious chore and the clumsy interface and monetary hoopla begs you to dump your teammates for the game's default team.

Playing the game is where the frustration really begins. Not only do your eight AI team players run into corners and crawl in circles like spastic worms, but they'll shoot at anything *except* the enemy. When trying to shoot unsuspecting opponents, your shots do nothing more than alert ridiculously accurate opponents to your position.

EXTRME PAINTBRAWL's 2.5D graphics are just bad. Floating

paint splats and clipping problems aside, the graphics look more like Intellivision than anything else. One nice touch—you actually die when a door accidentally crushes your

player. Interesting paradox for a non-violent shooter.

Did EXTRME PAINTBRAWL's multiplayer *raison d'être* fair better? Nope. After spending several hours dealing with game-crashing bugs, a clumsy DOS interface, patches (supposed to fix MP bugs), and no FAQs at the Head Games' Web site, I gave up on networking EP.

EXTRME PAINTBRAWL has it all—bugs, crashes, cheesy graphics, worthless AI, and a poorly designed interface. If paintball's your bag, then play the real thing and forget about buying this dud. —*Raphael Liberator*

## Iron John Hawk

★☆☆☆☆  
Publisher: JVC Digital Studios  
Price: \$19.95  
[www.jvc.com](http://www.jvc.com)

**E**ssentially an action game with puzzle elements, IRON JOHN is just plain underwhelming.

It starts out with a reasonably good premise. Papa John Hawk, a

famous explorer, disappears while searching for the legendary Shards of Power in the South Pacific, in 1944. His son, Iron John, sets out to rescue him and find the Shards of Power before the Nazis. Iron John's plane crashes and it's up to him to make his way across the island, find his father (and the Shards), and stop the Nazis at the same time.

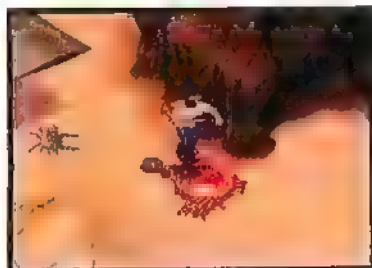
That's where the good stuff ends in IRON JOHN. You'll have to run around getting objects to use in various places while also trying to blow away an endless array of lame creatures. The crabs on the first level stand out as one of the more insipid foes.

Iron John moves like a rock with legs, his movements utterly stiff and clunky. The control scheme is exceptionally annoying since you can only use the keyboard and mouse, and you can't reconfigure. A gamepad would have been a godsend for this game.

The graphics are reasonably good, considering that the game is played from an overhead perspective. It's got the flavor of a 1930's serial adventure and the island at least serves as an interesting locale. The sound is okay, with suitable effects for various actions and situations.

There's nothing distinguished in either case, however, and that's the problem with game as a whole. There's just nothing there to hold your attention.

Unless you're trapped in an airport with just your PC and a copy of IRON JOHN, you'll want to avoid this turkey. —*Jim Lynch*



## Street Fighter Alpha 2

★☆☆☆☆  
Publisher: Capcom  
Price: \$39.99  
[www.capcom.com](http://www.capcom.com)

If you are a fan of the STREET FIGHTER experience, here's something that should save you some quarters. STREET FIGHTER



ALPHA 2 is such a faithful port of the arcade game, I almost ran into the kitchen to buy some tokens.

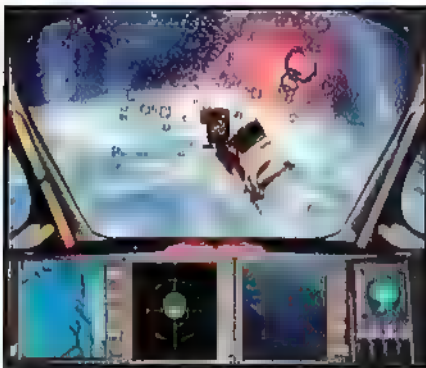
No fancy polygons here, just really pixelated 2D sprites and scrolling backgrounds. Weirdly enough, the game is marginally fun, despite the horribly dated graphics and tired concept. There are a couple dozen characters including the ubiquitous Japanese schoolgirl, whose skirt flies up with every panty-revealing kick, and the stereotypical brawling American tough guy. Control is good with three kinds of kicks and three kinds of punches. Combine these with various directional key rolls and all kinds of combos are possible.

This game might have some appeal as a way to explore an aspect of gaming from days gone by, but it's poorly implemented—it actually tried to install DirectX3 on my machine.

Nostalgia aside, there are much better fighting games. This game is really not worth your money unless you are a die-hard STREET FIGHTER Fan. —*Kenneth Johnson*

# Subs, Sorcerers, and Scientists

Three Action Games With Nothing in Common but This Page Number



## Fatal Abyss



Publisher: Segasoft  
Price: \$29.99

[www.fatalabyss.com](http://www.fatalabyss.com)

Microsoft's leaky and pre-scripted 1996 clunker DEADLY TIDE may have anchored underwater combat gaming firmly to the ocean floor just as it was getting ship-shape, but titles like Humansoft/Sega's FATAL ABYSS may just float this genre right back up to the surface again.

The surprisingly competent ABYSS drops you into the middle of a futuristic struggle over a newly discovered energy source found only on the ocean floor. It's your job, as a member of either the good guy Eco Systems or not-so-good-guy Proteus Tech, to fight for your extraction rights as you navigate through what is a very convincing liquid environment.

The game offers numerous mission-based scenarios, each with very specific and nicely varied objectives that tax both you and your custom-armed craft to the max. Though Humansoft's dark version of the ocean floor is really quite bland and playable sectors are limited in size, all around you are enemy and friendly ships and installations that

just go nuts at the slightest sign of trouble.

Explosions are plentiful and impressive with lots of blow-apart targets, eye-popping lighting effects and associated bubbles. Yet ABYSS isn't just a

blastfest. Though the game's multiple controls make for a reflex workout and a brain drain once the action heats up, a stealthy, bottom-hugging tact with engines, sonar, and headlights off is often the best approach. And that does keep things interesting.

The game manual is wanting for more information and controls are a pain to custom configure yet FATAL ABYSS is solid entertainment for the aqua-warriors among us. —Gordon Goble

## Glover



Publisher: Hasbro Interactive  
Price: \$39.95

[www.hasbro.com](http://www.hasbro.com)

GLOVER has a simple story. A wizard accidentally blows up his castle, the explosion sending his magic gloves into the air. One lands safely on the ground, the other in a vat of "evil potion" (guess where your evil nemesis comes from). The explosion also knocks

loose the castle's crystals. The good glove casts a spell that turns them into rubber balls, thus saving them from being destroyed. Unfortunately the balls are scattered in different places. As the good glove, it's your job to find and return them to the Wizard without getting nailed by the evil glove and his minions.

Graphically the game is pretty, with lots of primary colors and in some places the scenery reminded me of the old *Road Runner* cartoons. GLOVER has a look and feel that will probably be a hit with younger gamers.

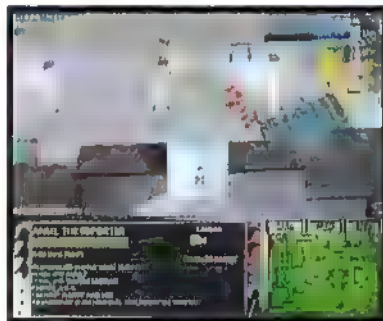
Gameplay centers on your ability to handle the magic balls.

Maneuvering them can be very tricky at times but gets easier the more you play. Once you get used to him, Glover generally handles fairly well...considering that he's a glove. In-game help is available from a profoundly annoying floating hat called Mr. Tip.

The game is worth checking out if you're really into platform games and you want something a bit different. It doesn't take itself seriously and provides an enjoyable platform romp. If you're only a casual platform gamer then you'd best stay away. —Jim Lynch

Madison Square Garden as a gun-toting soldier, camera-carrying reporter, pepper gas-wielding scientist, or little baby Godzilla.

Each player type has a different set of capabilities; scientists stun and incapacitate; soldiers favor guns and lethal explosives; 'zillas bite and sport deadly, fishy breath; reporters can't attack at all, but can reconnoiter while avoiding damage, allowing others to monitor their camera feed. You'll find the usual ammo and health power-ups scattered



about the levels. One unique power-up, "grow fish," allows the baby 'zillas to grow in both size and strength, although never to the gargantuan proportions of their mommy. When you die as a baby 'zilla, you revert to the smallest size.

Game types vary from your basic free-for-all and team deathmatch to Capture the Flag—I mean, the Egg—and Escape from New York, in which humans cooperate to kill the Godzillas before they grow large enough to escape from the city.

The gameplay, the sound, and the software-only, third-person graphics are pretty basic and you can't even alter your view. Somehow it all comes off as a massively multiplayer, third rate DIABLO.

And you don't even get to trash the Brooklyn Bridge.

—Mark Clarkson

## Godzilla Online



Publisher: Gamestorm  
Price: \$9.95 monthly Gamestorm membership  
[www.gamestorm.com](http://www.gamestorm.com)

Fans of the latest Godzilla movie take note: Gamestorm's GODZILLA ONLINE lets you revisit such locations as the Fulton Street Fish Market and





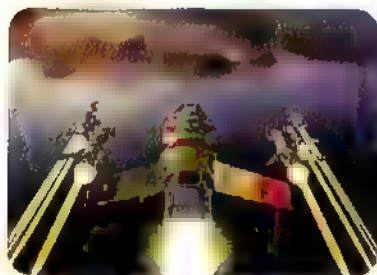


# HOMEWORLD®

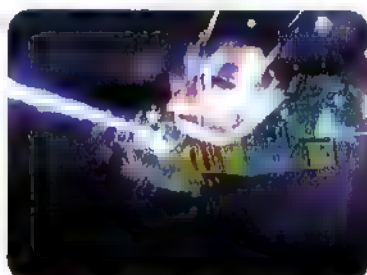
Actual Game Screen



Game of the Show E3 1998 -CGW / Winner of UGO's Best Real-Time S



Choose unit types, fleet formations and flight tactics to create the best combat group for each tactical situation.



An advanced research tree lets you construct 54 ships between two distinct races, from lightly armored fighter class interceptors to gigantic carriers that can build and transport up to 250 ships into battle.



Detailed weapon systems including mass drivers, guided missiles, ion cannons and mines - operate automatically to track multiple or single targets.



Custom from f and mission even t for

Find detailed gameplay and ship specifications at [www.sierrastudios.com](http://www.sierrastudios.com)

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Go to #053 @ [www.computergaming.com/infolink](http://www.computergaming.com/infolink)

LOCATION: The Great Wasteland.

DESTINATION: Galactic Core.

## WARNING:

Enemy Yaliden strike force sighted.

Both ships under attack.

Yaliden Carrier with Missile Destroyer and Assault Frigate Fleet passing striking distance.

Armada Commander: [Name]

Yaliden Carrier: [Name]

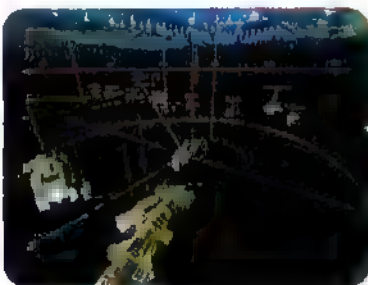
Yaliden Missile Destroyer: [Name]

Yaliden Assault Frigate: [Name]

## strategy Game of E3



Size your game - level consumption fleet size to objectives and the color scheme your Armada.



Command the smallest scout ship or your entire armada in an unrestricted 3D world for pinpoint control.



Explore super detailed galactic regions, from asteroid fields to nebulae to dust clouds.



Lead your Armada through 16 single-player missions, or play against seven opponents over the Internet or LAN in multiplayer scenarios. A robust mission editor lets you create your own maps for online campaigns.

**SIERRA**  
STUDIOS

**relic**  
ENTERTAINMENT

ESRB  
RP  
CONTENT RATED BY  
ESRB





**YOUR PEOPLE** have been trapped on  
a hostile world for 1,300 years.



**YOUR PAST** is a single ancient  
ruin and a blackened stone that points the  
way to the center of the galaxy.



**YOUR PRESENT** is a quest for  
answers and a five mile long starship that  
took 60 years to build.



**THE FUTURE. . . is in jeopardy.**

# Go Team!

*Dynamix Delivers the Multiplayer Goods*

by Jim Lynch

With the release of TRIBES, online multiplayer gaming has just moved to the next level. Although there's a storyline behind the game, forget it: It doesn't matter and you won't remember much of it once the action begins anyway. All you need to know is that the game is just packed with seriously great multiplayer action. TRIBES is one of the first games to seriously give the *QUAKE* franchise a run for its multiplayer money.

If you're a player that hates manuals, don't worry. Dynamix has a built-in training mode that will have newbies up and running in just a few minutes. The training mode covers armor, weapons, piloting vehicles, interface, and play modes.

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



### APPEAL:

Gamers ready for the next big thing in multiplayer action gaming.

**PROS:** Gorgeous graphics; great gameplay.

**CONS:** No single-player practice mode; standard weapon mix.

**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Windows 95/98/NT (with SP3), Pentium 200 (Pentium 166 with 3D card), 32MB RAM, SVGA video card, sound card, 28.8 modem for Internet play.

**3D SUPPORT:** 3Dfx

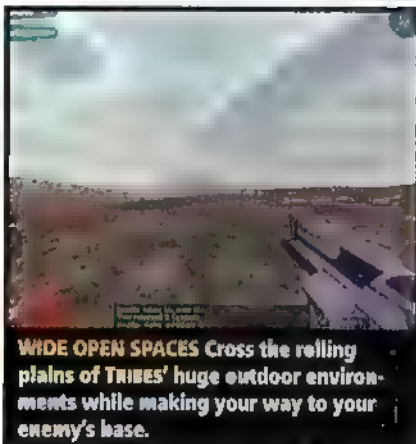
**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** LAN, Internet (2-32 players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$39.95  
Publisher: Dynamix  
Eugene, OR  
(800) 757-7707

[www.tribesplayers.com](http://www.tribesplayers.com)

TRIBES comes with a variety of mission types. You can play Capture the Flag, Capture and Hold, Defend and Destroy, Find and Retrieve, and, of course, Deathmatch. Connecting to a server is easy, just be sure you're connected to the Internet before you launch the game. TRIBES comes with a built-in server list box, making it very easy to find a game.

For the team games, each side generally has a base (and flag) that has to be defended. The base has item dispensers for ammo and other goodies, turrets, and a generator. Enemies can wreak great amounts of havoc if they infiltrate



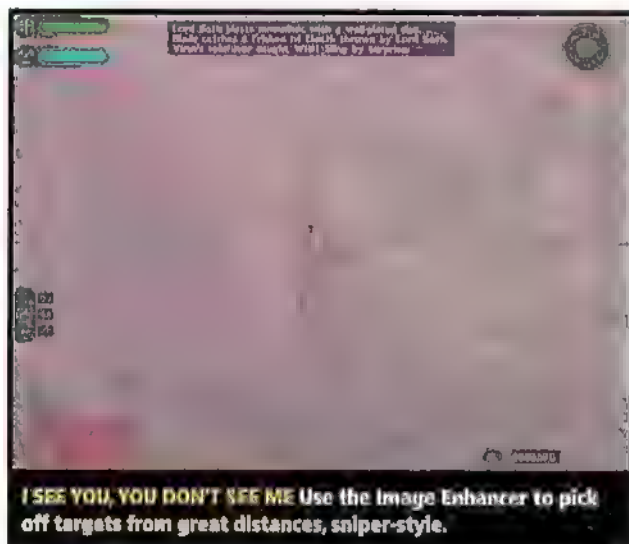
**WIDE OPEN SPACES** Cross the rolling plains of TRIBES' huge outdoor environments while making your way to your enemy's base.

your base and damage this stuff, so a good defense is a must.

You'll also find the standard array of weapons including a Plasma Gun, Chaingun, Grenade Launcher, and Laser Rifle. TRIBES also features a Mortar Gun, Targeting Laser (for targeting use in tandem with a teammate), and Electron Flux Gun.

### The Great Outdoors

TRIBES doesn't require a 3D accelerator (and looks pretty good without one). But if you have a 3Dfx Glide compatible card (an OpenGL patch should be available as you read this) then you're in for a real treat. Most of TRIBES is



**I SEE YOU, YOU DON'T SEE ME** Use the Image Enhancer to pick off targets from great distances, sniper-style.

played outdoors and, when running under a 3Dfx card, the scenery is absolutely gorgeous. You'll see snow, rain, and eerie nighttime landscapes, complete with a moon in the sky. The nighttime areas are beautiful to look at and great for stalking players from the other team. Players are well animated, as is every-

thing else. Once you get used to the sheer freedom of playing in such large outdoor environments, you'll find corridor-based shooters claustrophobic by comparison.

One unique twist in gameplay worth noting is the inclusion of jets in each player's armor. The jets allow players to fly for short distances and recharge their energy automatically in a few seconds. This might seem like a minor thing but it adds a new dimension to gameplay since there's so much space to maneuver around in. You can also fly a variety of ships including a scout flyer, HPC, and LPC.

One thing that I absolutely loved was the Image Enhancer. It gives

you the ability to zoom in on objects from far away and engage in some great sniper action. At any time in the game you can click on the E button to view objects from a distance. You can toggle the magnification to 2x, 5x, 10x, or 20x your normal vision. This feature adds a whole different dimension to the game, making it possible to pick off targets from great distances.

### Teamwork Makes All the Difference

Teamwork is both the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of TRIBES. If you have a strong team then chances are you'll have a blast. If your team stinks then you'll be banging your head in frustration as the other side walks away with your flag or otherwise kicks your team's collective rear end. The game lacks any sort of offline, single-player practice mode.

Teams that don't cooperate with each other will find themselves getting stomped regularly. If you're a fan of multiplayer games, you'll enjoy TRIBES. **CGW**

*Jim Lynch can be found playing Tribes as "Jimzilla." Feel free to blow his head off.*



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So maybe you don't have the railgun skillz of Immortal, the ESP of Thresh, or the military acumen of Gadianton. That's okay! Here's your chance to win a PGL prize pack without playing a single match! Simply complete the form below and send it to us. All submissions will be entered in a drawing to take place at the PGL Spring '99 Season Championships. *The Grand Prize Winner will receive:*

A fully-loaded, AMD K6-2-powered PC • A Viper V550 graphics card from Diamond Multimedia (NVIDIA RIVA TNT-based)  
128MB of synchronous memory from MOV Memory • A LinkSys Fast Ethernet Network Starter Kit  
A Logitech mouse • An Advent Powered Partner AV390PL sound system

Just fill out the form below and send it in by April 6, 1999!  
Go to [www.pgl.com](http://www.pgl.com) for complete rules and for web or alternate entry info.

## Question 1

Where were the PGL Season 1 live finals held?

- ☐ Orlando, FL ☐ San Francisco, CA  
☐ Seattle, WA ☐ Dallas, TX



## Question 2

Which of the following games has never been featured in a PGL season?

- ☐ Command & Conquer: Red Alert ☐ Ultima Online  
☐ Quake ☐ Total Annihilation

## Question 3

Which of the following players have competed in more than one PGL season Finals event?

- ☐ Makavell ☐ Gadianton  
☐ Immortal ☐ RB-Ren



## Question 4

Which of these publications has never covered the PGL?

- ☐ Rolling Stone ☐ Reader's Digest  
☐ Playboy ☐ The Wall Street Journal

## Question 5

Lead PGL official Anthony Yee often goes by what screen name?

- ☐ PGLshmoobot ☐ Tsetsuki  
☐ Neova ☐ Garthgantu

## Question 6

The PGL Commissioner is:

- ☐ David Stern ☐ Nolan Bushnell  
☐ Erik Lundberg ☐ Douglas Lowenstein



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

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Simply cut out this form, fill out the quiz, and mail it back by April 6, 1999 to:

Attn: PGL Spring '99 Contest  
Total Entertainment Network  
562 Mission Street, 5th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105

Go to #275 @ [www.computergaming.com](http://www.computergaming.com)!

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# Arms Race

GLOBAL DOMINATION's Missile-Firing Mayhem Is Fun, if Puzzling

by Jesse Hiatt

**M**aking a game that appeals to both hard-core strategy gamers and hard-core action gamers is like recording an album for both jazz fans and heavy metal fans: Some people enjoy both, just generally not at the same time. It's a difficult mix to get right, with hard-core strategists generally suffering as a game's pace speeds up and hand-eye coordination becomes a bigger factor for success. With GLOBAL DOMINATION, Psygnosis has tried to make a genre-bending game, but has fallen short. The result is little more than a mildly addictive, fairly fun arcade game.

## Blow Up Stuff

GLOBAL DOMINATION is extremely fast paced and action

packed. Obviously, a serious attempt has been made to give the game a strategic component, but I would guess that few people will be able to stop mouse-clicking long enough to use any of these features. GLOBAL DOMINATION looks most like a frenzied implementation of Reagan-era "Star Wars" concepts. The game takes place on a beautiful 3D globe, which you rotate by moving the mouse. War between nations in the futuristic setting consists of shooting dozens of missiles at each other. Attack missiles move slowly and do various types of damage (depending on their type); defensive missiles move much

faster, but only damage other missiles and airborne targets. There are also offensive and defensive naval and air units, as well as powerful satellites (which show up later in the game).

By pressing the space bar with the cursor over a country, you enter Tactical View. This allows you to see the various resources of a country, and if you control it, alter various settings (this is the strategy part). You can't spend very much time at all in this mode, unfortunately, because while you are in this view, the battle is still going on, and you are a sitting duck. This view is invaluable however, for targeting your attacks. If you click on a specific resource, that target will be highlighted when you return to attack mode, which makes hitting it easier.

GLOBAL DOMINATION deserves recognition for being one of the few unique games to be released in a long time. The gameplay is dissimilar to everything else out there, except for MISSILE COMMAND, but even this comparison doesn't hold up past a cursory look.

## What the Hell?

When a game designer breaks with convention, it is doubly

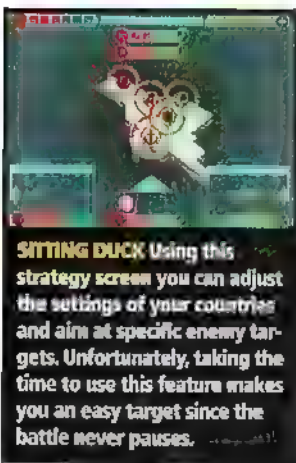
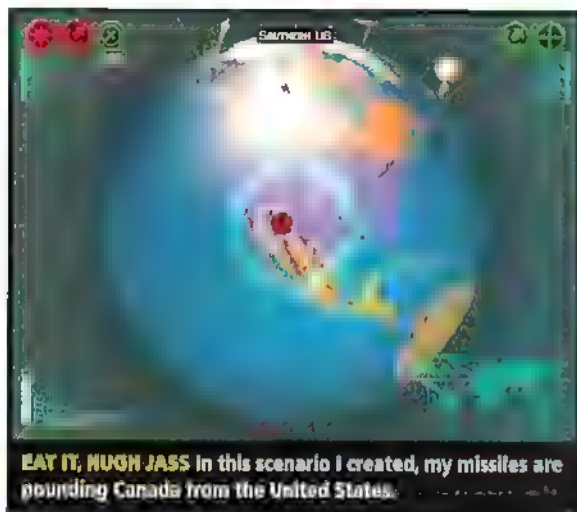
important to write a clear manual or to include a good tutorial, and herein lies GLOBAL DOMINATION's biggest problem. The manual is downright terrible, making a simple game almost impossible to learn how to play. For instance, it refers to the "operation center" in the manual, but in the game it's called a "factory." Your superior officers suggest that you're fresh from training in the first FMV. What training? What happened to the tutorial? After the long and arduous task of figuring out how to play, I was even more enraged when I finally figured out how simple it was. A well-written manual would have helped this game immeasurably.

The other aspect worth noting is that the game is extremely challenging. Even in easy mode, progress through the scenarios takes superhuman feats of skill.

GLOBAL DOMINATION's saving grace is the conflict editor. Using this full-featured scenario creator you can set up any scenario you want. You can take back the western United States for Mexico, play Iraq and launch missiles at Israel and Turkey, or, if you've had a bad day, you can follow the suggestion of the game's ads and take it out on Canada.

Hard-core strategy gamers are not going to like this game. Its emphasis on frenzied mouse-clicking is sure to leave them cold. But if you're interested in a unique game, and are willing to learn on your own without benefit of a helpful manual or tutorials, GLOBAL DOMINATION can be an exciting action gaming experience. **CGW**

*Jesse was depressed after the Persians rolled over his happy empire in CIV II, and is channeling his negative waves into tank warfare with both PANZER GENERAL II and PANZER COMMANDER.*



**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

★★★★☆

**APPEAL:** Action gamers looking for a brand-new kind of gameplay and a whoppin' challenge.

**PROS:** Refreshingly unique, action packed

**CONS:** Too difficult for all but the hard-core, terrible manual, conflicts with some hardware acceleration setups.

**DIFFICULTY:** Advanced.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 133, Windows 95/98, 32MB RAM, 284KB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, sound card.

**3D SUPPORT:** 3Dfx

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** Serial (2 players), IPX, TCP/IP (2-16 players).

Price: \$44.99

Publisher: Psygnosis

Foster City, CA

(510) 787-6500

[www.psygnosis.com](http://www.psygnosis.com)



# Still on Approach

*FALCON 4.0 Has Shipped—and Once It's Finished, It May be a Five-Star Sim*

by Tom "KC" Basham

**F**ALCON 4.0 has finally arrived, but can it live up to what more than four years of waiting has placed upon it? FALCON 4.0 looks to deliver everything a sim fan could hope for...and more. Unfortunately, due to some serious bugs, that delivery has been delayed. But assuming those bugs get ironed out, it has the potential to become the standard against which other sims are measured for years to come.

## Not Just a Jet

In the sim's whopping 600-page manual, producer Gilman Louie says the FALCON 4.0 team wasn't interested in just building an accurate simulation of an F-16. Instead, the team wanted to



**HAPPY LANDINGS** The F-16 is tricky to land, and must be put down gently. Even experienced pilots will find landings challenging here.

re-create the feel of being an F-16 pilot, operating over a modern battlefield. This meant creating more than a highly accurate flight model or impressive avionics suite, it meant creating an entire virtual world around the player.

Although the product features scripted Tactical Engagement mis-

sions, as well as an Instant Action mode for newcomers, the heart and soul of the product is the dynamic campaign mode. Here, you assume the role of a pilot in an F-16 squadron during a conflict on the Korean peninsula. The campaign engine runs an entire war, assigning missions to units

throughout the theater. A list (displayed either by priority to the war effort or by launch time) shows the missions available to the player's squadron. You can fly any of these missions, with the freedom to choose whether you want to focus on air-to-air or air-to-ground sorties. Keep in mind, though, that flying "low priority" missions won't do much to help the war effort.

Once airborne, your plane is just one player in a living combat environment. To get an idea just how much is going on, you can enable the labels option, which puts a blue (friendly) or red (enemy) tag next to each object in the world. This is an excellent training aid to help less-experienced players

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** Wide variety of configuration options allows appeal to action-oriented and hard-core simulation fans.



**PROS:** Truly dynamic campaign; multiplayer capability; very realistic; creates amazing suspension of disbelief; many configuration options.

**CONS:** Maximum difficulty requires significant training time; many bugs present in current version.

**DIFFICULTY:** Configurable, beginner to advanced.

**REQUIREMENTS:** 166MHz Pentium, Win95 or Win98, 32Mb RAM

**3D SUPPORT:** Direct3D, Glide.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** Null modem, modem, TCP/IP (number of players limited only by available bandwidth).

Price: \$59.95

Distributor: MicroProse

At: Irvine, CA

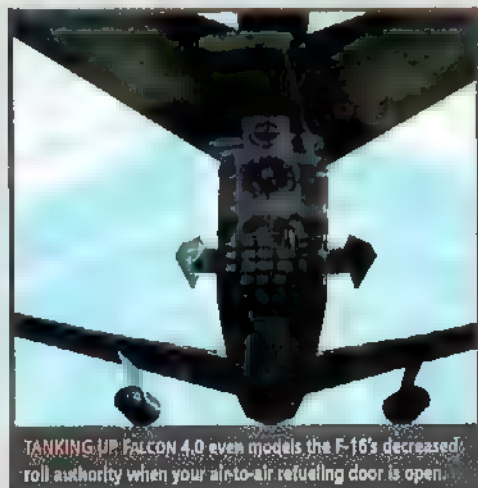
TSR: 800-455-0

www.falcon4.com

## Falcon 4.0 vs. the Real Thing

*An F-16 Pilot Compares MicroProse's F-16 to Lockheed's Version.*

by Robey Price



**TANKING UP** Falcon 4.0 even models the F-16's decreased roll authority when your air-to-air refueling door is open.

**F**rom April 1987 until April 1988 I flew the F-16A in the 80th Fighter Squadron at Kunsan Air Base, Republic of Korea. I've now been able to replay that experience with the F-16C in FALCON 4.0. F-16 pilots have described flying the Viper as a "magic carpet" ride. I think the game captures this sensation with the sights and sounds from the cockpit. The whine of the engine is perfect. The reflections on the canopy make me smile. In this aspect, the game excels.

How does FALCON 4.0's flight model compare to the real thing? Very nicely, considering that you're sitting at a constant 1 G, playing on a 19-inch monitor. There are numerous touches that show an attention to detail. For example, during the takeoff roll, pilots disconnect the nosewheel steering (AR/NWS light on right side of HUD) around 70

develop their situational awareness skills.

In flight, the simulated radio stack can monitor any two of seven radio frequencies (including Guard, Proximity, Package, Flight, and Tower). All radio traffic is "live," that is, all radio calls are generated on the fly by AI-controlled pilots as they maneuver around the world.

This creates for an amazing sense of immersion, and it can be great fun to simply listen to the battles unfold over the radio (reminiscent of Princess Leia and company listening to the Luke's dogfight over the Death Star in *Star Wars*).

Surprisingly easy-to-use menus let you issue a wide variety of predefined commands to wingmen (human or computer), including formation and attack commands.

After flying, fighting, and possibly aerial refueling, you'll also rely on the radio to get home. Once within 30 nautical miles of the airbase, you'll contact the tower and request a landing (or declare an emergency). Computer-generated air traffic control then vectors you to a final approach fix and clears

you for landing. Be prepared for a challenge here—landing is very realistic, and it's easy to snap your Falcon's gear off.

### Under the Microscope

FALCON 4.0's flight model is second to none, with flight parameters conforming to real-world specifications. Although the fly-by-wire flight computer tries to keep the pilot out of trouble, attacking two or more limiters (AOA, yaw, etc) at the same time can result in some nasty departures from controlled flight. FALCON 4.0 accurately recreates such effects such as deep stall. To escape, you must use the real-world procedure of flipping the Manual Pitch Override switch and "rocking" the aircraft out.

knots. The game does this automatically.

The Flight Control System (FLCS) is modeled pretty well. To see this in action, next time you take off, leave the gear extended and keep your speed below 300 knots. Now roll into a steep turn. Notice the slow roll rate? Okay, raise the gear and now roll the airplane. This decreased roll authority also occurs when your refueling door is open. This is exactly like real life.

In what is called "cruise gains", the FLCS either limits your Angle of Attack (AOA) or the amount of G you can pull. Below approximately 380 knots in the game, the FLCS will give you maximum AOA. Above that speed, the FLCS becomes a G limiter. In the training missions, I can only get a maximum of 7.3 Gs, not the 9 Gs of the real airplane.

Speaking of G limits, in some respects the game is tougher than real life. The blackout modeling is visually similar to the real thing. However, I think your simulated pilot has a



**BASE CLOSED** An F-16 makes a low pass over a damaged airbase. Some missions task you with bomb-damage assessment.

Simply lighting the afterburners won't blast you back into normal flight.

Weapon modeling is equally impressive and, except for omitting a few classified details here and there, provides an amazingly accurate representation of weapons employment. So detailed, in fact, that besides the manual the product comes with over 30 prebuilt training missions (designed by F-16 instructor pilot Pete Bonanni) just to get you up and flying. Bonanni



**GUNS GUNS GUNS!** This Su-25 Stormovik is about one more bullet hit away from being removed from the inventory of the North Korean Air Force.

also posts regular tactics articles on [www.falcon4.com](http://www.falcon4.com).



**CLEARED FOR LANDING:** Not only are airports in the proper location, but the simulated night way landing strips.



## Falcon 4.0 vs. the Real Thing (continued)

lower G tolerance threshold than real fighter pilots do. Fortunately, gamers don't have to tense their bodies and grunt while straining against the G forces. (My wife really appreciates this.)

The avionics are complicated on the highest realism setting. Even for a former F-16 pilot, this required an investment of time to learn how to "play the piccolo" again. Once I learn all the weapons employment stuff, I just might start using the "simplified" setting for avionics. This setting is closer to what I used in the Block 15 model F-16A (absent any NCTR functions). The Fault Warning system is extensive; all gamers should study pages 20-6 to 20-10 in the manual. One of the few errors I've noticed is a glitch in the Selective Jettison and Emergency Jettison



**REAL DEAL** Captain Robey Price, 80th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Kunsan AFB, Republic of Korea, in 1988.

Avionics are finely detailed, easily on par with products like Jane's F-15. The Threat Warning System (TWS) is particularly interesting, featuring a wide variety of warning tones for each type of radar. If you listen to samples of each tone in the Tactical Reference section before takeoff (focusing on the likely threats in the next mission), you may be better able to ID enemy aircraft. (However, AWACS aircraft are usually there to help you make a positive identification.)

Tactical Engagement mode provides a full-blown mission editor and single-mission play. Besides the 31 training missions shipped with the product, numerous Web sites are already posting user-built missions and minicampaigns.

Graphics are quite impressive, but be forewarned—maximum performance requires maximum hardware. Aging 200MHz Pentiums provide an acceptable frame rate, but *only* if you turn down some of the settings. If you want to crank up FALCON 4.0's graphics features, you'll want the biggest and the best hardware, such as a 400MHz+ Pentium II with at least 128Mb of RAM and a good 3D card.

### Not So Fast

So, what's the downside? As with too many computer games shipped these days, FALCON 4.0 has its fair share of bugs, some of

which are quite serious. The initial version has a tendency to crash quite regularly, although the first patch (version 1.03) seems to have helped greatly. Unfortunately, the 1.03 patch inadvertently crippled the artificial intelligence, keeping many airborne and ground units from actually fighting. Radio calls often transpose call signs, making for some confusing radio conversations. The computer-controlled ATC often clears two planes for landing at the same time on the same runway, and AI pilots will often run into you while taxiing. The multi-player mode also suffers problems.

Depending on your viewpoint, these problems can range from simple annoyances to intolerable breakages. Most of the problems impact campaign mode, with substantially less impact on Tactical Engagement missions. Fortunately,



**HOG WILD** An A-10 Warthog prepares to strike as an unknown aircraft meets its doom in the distance.

features. Typically we could jettison everything but ECM pods and the missiles on the wingtips. In the game, you cannot jettison anything that is on the centerline station (STA 5)—not even the fuel tank.

I toured the FALCON 4.0 world using an actual map I got while stationed in Korea. I'm pleased with what I saw. The location of airfields is superb, and the inclusion of highway landing strips is a welcomed surprise. This might seem like a small detail to gamers, but it impressed me. The gameworld does have a variety of topography, but it is not as mountainous as the real ROK. Sadly, the poorly printed game map is unusable for navigation, but the game manual is superb.

In all, I like FALCON 4.0. Despite the glitches, which still need to be ironed out, MicroProse has done an excellent job of capturing the experience of piloting a real F-16. **CGW**

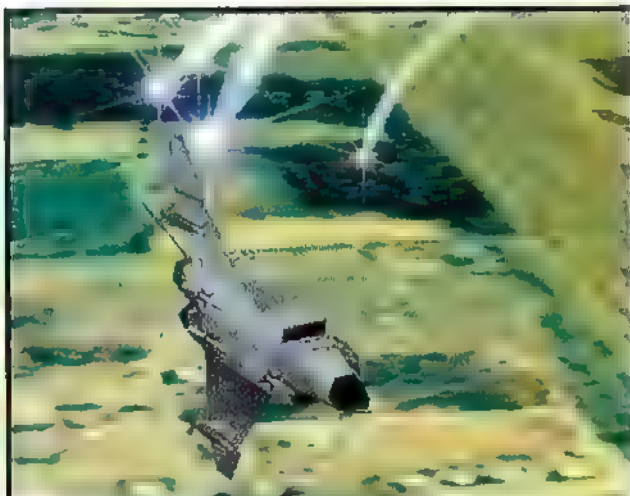
*Robey Price considers himself a very lucky man. He flew RF-4s and F-16s for the Air Force, and he now flies MD-80s. As he says, "Hey, it beats working for a living."*

MicroProse says that it is fully committed to the project and hard at work, and additional patches are expected by the time this article sees print. As with FALCON 3.0 (which was released in a practically unplayable form) before it, FALCON 4.0 looks to significantly raise the bar for the entire industry... once the bugs are flushed out.

Overall, this writer is having far more fun playing FALCON 4.0 (despite wrestling with the bugs) than waiting these past years for the product to ship. There's so much depth to the sim that it may take some time before the full scope of the program is realized. Despite being a \$50 "game,"

FALCON 4.0 is an incredibly detailed simulation that in many ways exceeds training systems in military use. How real is it? Well, this writer often consults a real-world "Dash 1" manual for the F-16 when playing the game. If you really want to know what it's like to fly an F-16, then don't pass up FALCON 4.0—just be sure to check for patches. **CGW**

*Tom "KC" Basham is publisher of Debrief magazine ([www.bear-zone.com/debrief](http://www.bear-zone.com/debrief)), the magazine of simulation and strategy tactics. Lately, his life has consisted mostly of flying FALCON 4.0, with the occasional break for sleep.*



**FIGHTING WITH FLARE** An F-4 punches flares as it evades a heat-seeking missile. AI aircraft fly with fairly realistic tactics.

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# Messy-Schmitt

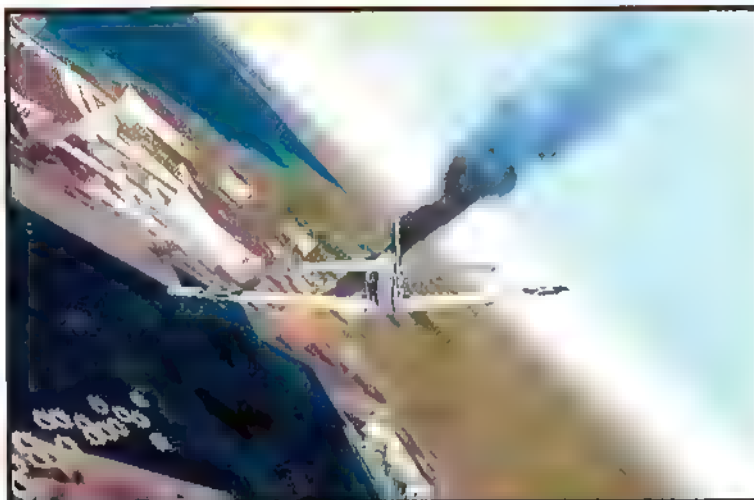
*Good Feel of Flying Fails to Make Up for Dull, Scripted Missions*

by Loyd Case

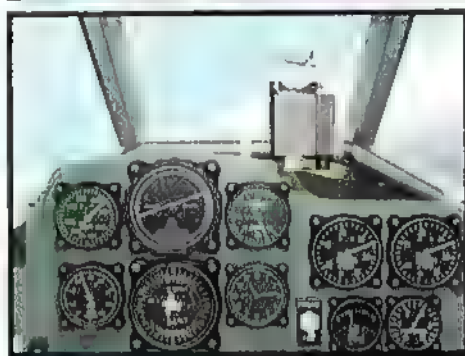
Only 4 percent of Luftwaffe fighter pilots who began World War II made it to the end of the war. The rest were either killed, incapacitated, or captured. In LUFTWAFFE

COMMANDER, you get to see if you have the stuff to be one of the 4 percent that made it. Unfortunately, the sim's briefings capture the sense of desperation as the war reaches its climax far better than the flying does.

This sim does break ground in some areas. As a pilot in Germany's budding new air force, you have the chance to be a volunteer in the Condor Legion, the quasi-mercenary unit that acted as Franco's air force during the Spanish Civil War. (The game shies away from controversial issues, though: you don't fly in the bombing of Guernica, for example, a notorious example of the first mass bombing of a civilian center.)



**OIL'S WELL:** A Condor Legion Bf-109 smokes a Republican oil refinery.



**SMOKIN' (G.I.) JOE:** An Me-262 sends a B-17 to its death over Germany.

In addition, you can fly on the Eastern Front and the battle for France. Flying over the Soviet Union, you encounter planes such as the P-39 Airacobra, I-16, and Mig-3. Over France, you may run into lesser-known aircraft like the French D.520 and the Belgian Fokker DXXI, as well as the occasional Hurricane or Tomahawk. However, the glaring exception is that there's no flyable Focke-Wulf 190.

## Model Flight

LUFTWAFFE COMMANDER was developed by Eagle Interactive, the same folks that brought you SABER ACE. SABER ACE's flight model can

be charitably described as "arcade-like." The designers at Eagle took the criticism to heart and put a lot of effort into the flight modeling for LUFTWAFFE COMMANDER. There's a very distinct feeling of inertial that varies substan-

tially among the flyable aircraft. The various Bf-109 models seem nimble, though a bit twitchy on the rudder, whereas the P-39 (flyable on in single missions) vaguely resembles a flying brick. The He-51 biplane is highly maneuverable and climbs well, but is slow.

I did notice that there seemed to be a distinct continuity between flying and spinning. Once in a spin, it's very difficult to recover. There were also odd lapses in the flying models of certain planes. For example, you can turn and turn in the Me-262, and never lose energy—though admittedly they are wide turns. All in all, the flying models seem reasonably competent when

stacked up against the competition. You do get real sense of flying while in the pilot's seat.

## It's in the Can

Unfortunately, LUFTWAFFE COMMANDER falls down badly in the mission department. At first look, it's exciting to be able to fly in the Spanish Civil War or on the Eastern Front. But you soon find out that all the

missions are heavily scripted. Worse, the campaigns are simply missions from the single mission list strung together in order. There's no dynamic campaign, and no sense of randomness in the individual missions.

It's actually worse than that, because you get a feeling of déjà vu as you move from one mission to the next. When you encounter the enemy, there's a certain predictability to their location, no matter the mission. There will be several flights above you (if you used the "z" key to move quickly from one location to another without actually flying the leg). There will be a couple of flights off to one side. There's almost always a flight of six somewhere, moving in line formation. It gets downright dull.

The Russian missions, which initially had me fired up, proved particularly uninspiring. Part of it was the extremely dull terrain graphics. LUFTWAFFE COMMANDER makes heavy use of obviously repeating tiled textures for terrain. The only saving grace is that there's extensive use of hills and mountains, something lacking in some other WWII sims. Because of the lack of a flyable FW-190, there were no

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** Flight sim fans looking to fly in new environs, such as the Eastern Front and the Spanish Civil War.

**PROS:** Flight models of campaign-flyable planes are good; Spanish Civil War and Eastern Front missions.

**CONS:** Scripted missions are predictable; AI is a mixed bag; bland terrain graphics; no FW 190.

**SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166, 32MB RAM, Windows 95/98, DirectX6

Price \$40.00

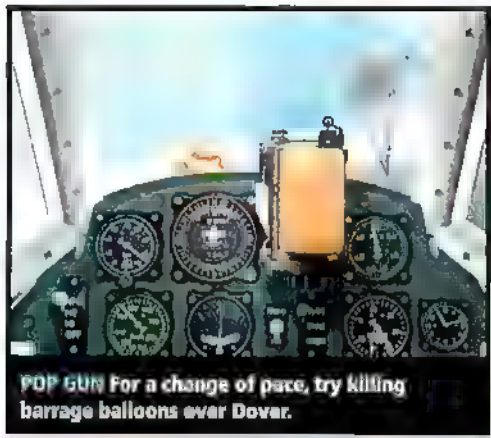
Publisher: Strategic Simulations Inc.

Novato, CA

(617) 761-3000

[www.luftwaffecommander.com](http://www.luftwaffecommander.com)





**POP GUN** For a change of pace, try killing barrage balloons over Dover.



**FATAL MYOPIA** Don't lose control at low altitudes—spins are very difficult to recover from.

real ground attack missions. Even in some supposedly large ground battles, the number of vehicles was very sparse.

This is somewhat compensated for by the enemy AI. The AI does a good job of using both the horizontal and vertical. It occasionally uses the strengths of the plane to its advantage—the Spitfires always seem to want to get into a turning fight if possible, whereas

the P-51 tends to use its speed to better advantage. But there are odd lapses in the AI. Sometimes it will get into a rut, pulling a series of descending turns that becomes predictable.

Then there's the bombers. If you attack a formation of B-17's, they immediately scatter. This is completely against Eight Air Force doctrine, which dictated tight formation ("box") flying so the planes could protect each other better with overlapping fields of fire. But the most comical episode occurred after I attacked a formation of B-17's with an Me-262. I ran out of fuel, but rather than ditch, I tried to glide home. I managed to get close to the airfield, and under 1,500

meters, when I was suddenly attacked from behind. I checked my six and discovered a B-17 diving on me. It made a number of swooping passes. At least the gunfire came from the right locations.

The game makes up for the canned nature of missions by offering a "Knight's Cross" difficulty level. In this level, all the flight and combat parameters are set to maximum realism. And if you die, you die. There's no reflying a mission. This is probably the best way to play the game from the outset—and avoid flying single missions if you want any sense of suspense. There's also a mission generator, but it creates relatively generic missions. It does allow you to fly other aircraft, such as the P-51 and Russian I-16. You can't save missions, however.

## Atmosphere and Combat

With a 4 percent survival rate from start to finish, you'd think things would get depressing for the Luftwaffe as the war progressed. While the missions don't capture this well, the briefings do a superb job of setting atmosphere. When your CO tells you that Russian soldiers shot one of your comrades in his cockpit when he crashlanded, you suddenly feel the urge to get your plane home no matter how difficult. The voice acting is mixed, but Eagle did use real Germans (speaking in English) to give the briefings, and the content sounds authentic.

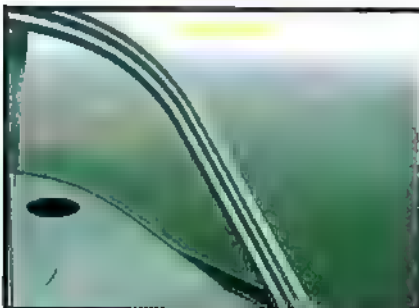
Combat is tough, but the main source of the difficulty is the viewing system. There are number of discrete views that don't overlap. Like real life, you can't see behind you in most planes. It's tough keeping your eye on the enemy. What finally worked best for me was to have the padlock view enabled in the virtual cockpit. The problem is that if you switch from the virtual cockpit (which you might do because none of the instruments are active in the virtual cockpit), the padlock stays in force, but it uses the discrete views. This is very distracting, and this viewing system won't win any awards for flexibility.

On a more positive note, realistic gunnery mode lives up to its name—you have to get "up close and personal" to score a kill. There's no ping of the target bubble from 1,000 feet.

## Flight Limited

There was a lot I liked about this game, but in the end, I find it very difficult to recommend it. The canned missions, limited mission generator, and weird AI makes this one to avoid for most virtual flyers. On the other hand, if you do get the urge to fly the He-51 over Spain or escort Ju-87's on tank busting missions in Russia, then there's nothing else like it. The flying, at least, is fun. **CGW**

*Yes, it's true, Loyd Case actually does play games on all that cool hardware he gets to test. Lately he's been pretending EUROPEAN AIR WAR is a benchmark test.*



**FATAL MYOPIA** Reporting a critical design error from SABRE ACE, the fixed views in LUFTWAFFE COMMANDER don't overlap.



**OPEN SKIES** You'll start your career in a biplane, and if you beat the odds, end it in a jet.



# Baldur's Great?

*BALDUR'S GATE Is a Very Ambitious Title That Gets Most Things Right*

by Scorpia

A certain amount of hype precedes all games, the highly anticipated BALDUR'S GATE more than most. As is usually the case, there is a wide gap between fact and fancy. We'll start with what's right with the game.

Character creation allows for the full range of AD&D races and classes—your choice of male or female—and even multiclass characters for nonhumans. Rolling up character stats works well. The values for required professions will always be at least the minimum; you can roll the dice over and over; you can deduct points from one or more stats and add to others,



IT'S OVER WHERE THE ORC SKOOL USED TA BE The automapping features are nicely done, both for outdoor travel and for area closeups.

subject to race and class restrictions. You can even store a "pretty good set of numbers" to recall later if you can't come up with better.

## Candlekeep Burning

After the creation process, you go into the tutorial at Candlekeep, where you can equip your character in fairly reasonable style. You won't be sent out to face ferocious hordes before you can even draw a breath. Little green-robed monks swarm over the area, ready to declaim helpful hints for those who only scanned the manual. In one section, you can even indulge in "virtual battle" against harmless monster illusions with a temporary party, to get at least some idea of how to handle a group during fights. Start up is thus far better than that found in most games, where you are poorly equipped and shoved into a hostile world before you even learn the interface properly.

Whenever you travel from one location to another in the outdoors, the program automatically saves your current position in a

special slot before sending you off. Restoring can be done at any time, while saving is possible only if no hostile critters are in the immediate area.

## No-go Solo

Nice touches notwithstanding, the game isn't a standout from the solo perspective. Part of this stems from the combat, which shoehorns AD&D mechanics designed for turn-based fighting

into a quasi-realtime system. By hitting the space bar, you can suspend the game at any time; you can also set an autopause to freeze action based on certain events, such as a character's target being killed, a character dying, his/her weapon becoming unusable, and so on. Without pausing, it's a real mess to try to direct the detailed actions of six characters in real-time combat. As it is, the pause method proves unsatisfactory, giving the action a

weird, jerky, stop-and-go feel—a bad thing, given the amount of fighting you do in BALDUR.

If you follow up directly on the main plot line, it's likely your party will soon find itself overmatched. So take time to explore all sorts of side areas to gain experience and gold, and find the occasional Neat Item. In time, this becomes inexpressibly tedious; you go from one boring combat to the next, while the game waits for you to get back to the plot.

One might think that with all of this wandering, it would be easier to find a decent mage for your party. Problem is, the evil mages available can cause fights to start within the group, and the other mages, all specialists, have serious shortcomings. Dyna,

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** Gamers looking to finally have multiplayer AD&D sessions on their PC.

**PROS:** Good for multiplayer campaigning; plot starts out strongly; nice flexibility for character design; powerful game engine

**CONS:** Combat system can be awkward, with questionable results; plotline and playability decline midway through; dialogue is spotty

**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate.

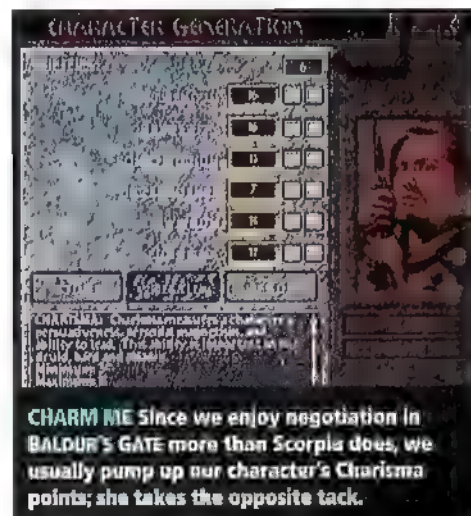
**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166 (P200MMX recommended), Windows 95/98, 32MB RAM, 300MB hard-drive space, 2MB 16-bit SVGA graphics, 4x CD-ROM, supports DirectX-compatible sound cards.

**3D SUPPORT:** None.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** Modem (2 players), IPX or TCP/IP LAN/Internet (2-6 players); all 1 CD per player.

Price \$49.95  
Publisher: Interplay  
Irvine, CA  
(919) 552-6655

www.interplay.com

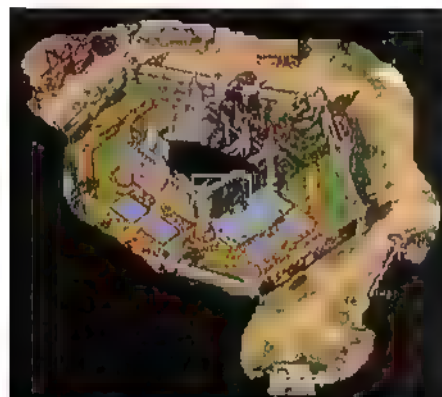


CHARM ME Since we enjoy negotiation in BALDUR'S GATE more than Scorpia does, we usually pump up our character's Charisma points; she takes the opposite tack.

for instance, cannot use such spells as Sleep, Confusion, Flame Arrow, and Hold Person. That leaves Xan, who cannot cast such vital spells as Magic Missile, Web, Fireball, and Lightning Bolt. It is possible to finish the game without a mage, but it certainly increases the difficulty.

It could be that I missed someone with reasonable abilities, since I talked to people only when necessary. Not only because they forever wanted to send us on dreary little quests, but also because the dialogue is often awful, along the lines of "Well, if you were so stupid/weak as to be captured, you're not good enough for us, so get lost." Diplomacy, tact, and consideration obviously took low priority in the writer's mind.

When we turn to the multiplayer side, things improve. A LAN hookup affords the best experience, with everyone in the same room but on different machines.



**HEAL EARLY AND OFTEN** With the amount of combat in **BALDUR'S GATE**, you'll need more than faith and a few potions on your side.

This is the closest you can get to live gaming experience, with lots of chatter and jokes in between tactical discussions.

Those discussions are important, and they relieve much of the burdensome parts of combat. You work out general strategies beforehand, having to then worry about maneuvering only your own character, instead of six. There is also greater flexibility in responding to different threats, backing off if severely injured (NPCs have no sense of self-preservation), and moving quickly to help someone in dire circumstances.

There is no question that **BALDUR** was designed from the first with multiplayer in mind. While solo adventuring is not exactly an afterthought, its true function seems to be for you to become familiar with the game, then export a character (of about 2nd–4th level) for the multiplayer side, so that you and your friends can indulge in a communal critter crunch.

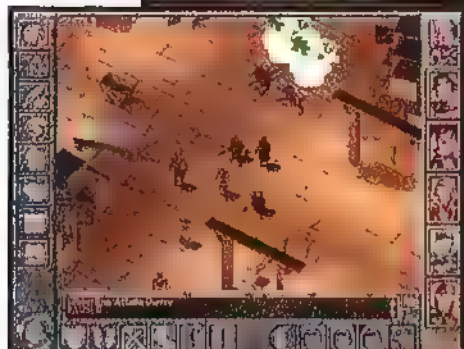
### Save the World Again?

The familiar plot at least offers a different focal point: Your

character is the "orphan with mysterious past" marked for death by a sinister armored figure. Bounty hunters and assassins show up throughout the game, eager to collect the reward offered by Mr. Sinister.

Unfortunately, what starts as rather interesting later fizzles out. In fact, the game becomes progressively more mechanical the closer you get to the finale. By the time you're in the city of Baldur's Gate, the whole thing is more like connect-the-dots than anything else, leading you practically by the nose to the inevitable (and exceptionally nasty) Fozzie fight at the finale. On the technical side, the game had a distressing tendency to crash every so often, usually when crossing a boundary line from one area to another, but also a few times during a save.

As a single-player product, **BALDUR'S GATE** aspires to greatness—a good engine, nice graphics, a real D&D feel—but has its share of flaws, particularly with AD&D-style combat. As a multiplayer product, it sports some interesting features and is more enjoyable by virtue of having other real people participating in the adventure. Anyone considering **BALDUR** should do so with an eye



### Swords Clash... and Clash...

Fighting takes longer than necessary in **BALDUR'S GATE**. As a veteran of many live AD&D sessions, I know how the dice should roll. Never have I seen such low numbers—10 and under, before adjustments for armor—come up consistently in combat after combat. That translates into a lot of misses (on both sides, to be fair) and some very *lo-o-o-ng* battles. Worse, it means your party members will be falling too many saving throws versus spells, especially early on, when they're low-level characters. Either the random number generator is programmed incorrectly or the designers have diddled the dice.

to the multiplayer aspect to get the most for their money. **CGW**

*Scorpio is looking forward to **DIABLO II**—she's confident it will be compelling for solo- and multiplayer*

## Move Me...Please!

**T**he movement AI needs a lot of work (so make sure you get the patch). No matter what formations are used, characters sooner or later get stuck somewhere, go in the wrong directions, or try to walk through walls. They also have a tendency to straggle when the party walks for more than a short distance, so that often one or more back-rank (usually the weaker) characters ends up well ahead of everyone else.

You can change the actual order of characters in the group, even though this info



is not mentioned anywhere in either the manual or the read.me file. Simply place the cursor over the right-hand portrait, hold down the left mouse button, and

slide the mouse up or down to exchange positions.

Another amazing "feature" is the inability of the party to camp out on long journeys. Whether it's a day, two days, or more, the merry band just troops along like mindless zombies, never stopping to rest. So the first thing you have to do on arrival is rest, because everyone's fatigued. In outdoor areas, that can be dangerous. In all the RPGs I've ever played, going back to the eight-bit machines, designers have made allowances for this; was that so hard to program in here?



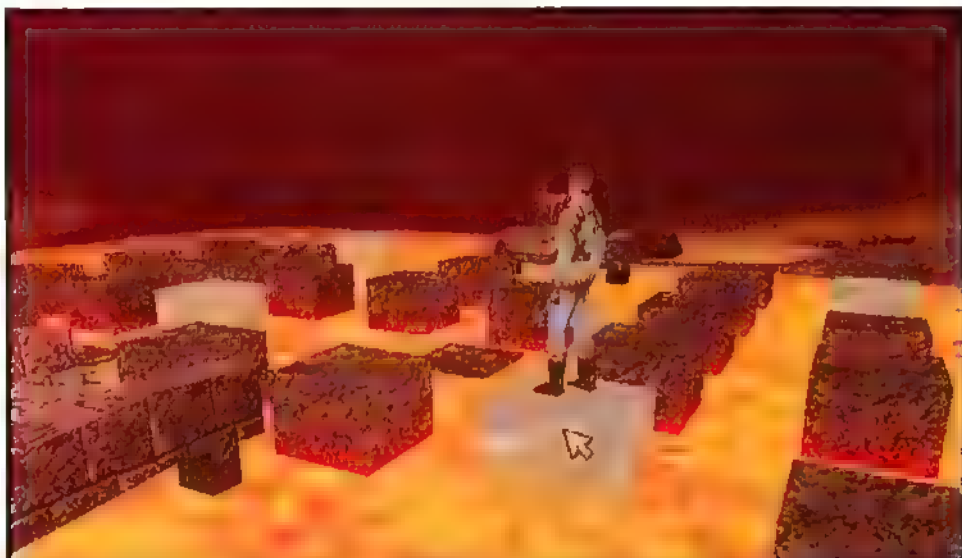
# Bloody Well Right

*This KING'S QUEST Is a Good Stand-alone Game, but May Alienate Longtime Fans*

by Thierry Nguyen

**R**emember the big changes that KING'S QUEST V: ABSENCE MAKES THE HEART GO YONDER brought to both the series and the adventure genre overall? It used a new, wordless, all-icon interface; it had hand-painted backgrounds; and it was the first Sierra game to have speech. Yet even with these changes, the core game remained the same. Well, get ready for another massive change to the KING'S QUEST name, in both design and execution.

This new KING'S QUEST is not only in 3D, but it's also the first in which you're not a member of the



**HOTSEAT JUMPING** While there are a couple of physical jumping puzzles, most puzzles still rely on your noggin rather than your nimbleness.

Royal Family and, more significant, the first in which you must shed blood in combat. You'll be disappointed if you're expecting another family adventure, but as a fantasy game in general, MASK OF ETERNITY is actually pretty good.

## Back to Simpler Times

In a year that brought adventure game after adventure game with complex plots—think SANITARIUM, REDGUARD, and GRIM FANDANGO—it's a bit of a surprise to find a game with a simpler plot. Here, you play Connor, a mild-mannered peasant who is suddenly tasked

with saving Daventry and a few other lands. The sacred Mask of Eternity (a beacon of all things good, like Truth, Light, and Order) has been shattered into five pieces and spread across the world; Connor needs to find all five pieces and reassemble the Mask.

MASK's plot plays off common fantasy and classical myth themes. Connor travels through seven worlds (eight, if you count the oh-so-brief Paradise Lost) and performs a series of Herculean tasks, such as slaying a mighty Basilisk in the Barren Region or healing the Sacred Heart in the Dimension of

Death. There are no real backstabbing or betrayals. The plot is a straightforward "unlikely hero rises up and defeats Foozle" scenario. In that regard, it is very much like previous KING'S QUEST games. Heck, there's

## Thinking and Thwacking

even a scoring system, and your point total is displayed when you finish the game.

The game's opening quickly introduces you to the first major change: the all-3D engine. Connor and the rare NPCs he runs into are rendered in full polygonal glory, and the world is now seen from either first- or third-person eyes.

The 3D engine has a huge effect on puzzle design. Object manipulation is now much more "physical." If you wanted to pull a high switch in an earlier game, for example, you probably would have typed "push box," then "get on box," and finally "pull switch." Here, you have to literally push the box, jump on top of it, and look up to pull the switch.

In general, however, the puzzles are familiar and old-school—finding and trading items, figuring out switch sequences, and so on. Don't fear that the 3D engine has turned this into a mindless action game; most of the puzzles are



**KILLING FOOZLE SOFTLY** Combat between you and the enemies is a simple click-and-hill affair.

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** Fantasy fans who like a mix of combat and old-school puzzling, longtime series fans who are prepared for a darker and bloodier KING'S QUEST.



**PROS:** Good puzzles, easy-to-learn combat with changeable difficulty; great character animation, good voice-acting and music; it's a KING'S QUEST game.

**CONS:** It's a KING'S QUEST game with gore and combat; annoying load times; high system requirements; camera-control interface interrupts gameplay; environmental graphics not as good as character graphics.

**DIFFICULTY:** Hard.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166, Windows 95, 32MB RAM, 400MB hard drive space, 4x CD-ROM, DirectX6 compatible sound and video cards.

**3D SUPPORT:** Direct3D, 3Dx Glide

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** None.

Price \$49.95

Publisher: Sierra Studios

Bellevue, WA

(800) 757-7707

www.sierrastudios.com

quite cerebral. There are a few jumping puzzles, but I found only one of them to be annoying. They require decent timing skills, but nothing like what's needed in a game like *TOMB RAIDER*.

Okay, so the plot and the puzzle design are familiar, but now we get to the biggest new twist: combat (which is gory and plentiful). As in *DIABLO*, fighting boils down simply to a point-and-click matter, with no defensive measures (besides your armor) and some hot-keys for potions. Gamers put off by this can set the combat on "Easy" to make enemies pretty much roll over.

Combat does have a point, though, in that it (like questing/puzzle-solving) gives you experience. Every critter you slay ups your experience meter, and with every level-increase comes more hit points, along with higher stats in armor class, melee weapon damage, and ranged weapon damage. These stats also increase whenever you pick up new weapons or armor. Each armor change affects Connor's appearance as well. He starts with a simple tunic and ends the game decked-out in mighty Sun Armor.

## Gremlins in the Woodwork

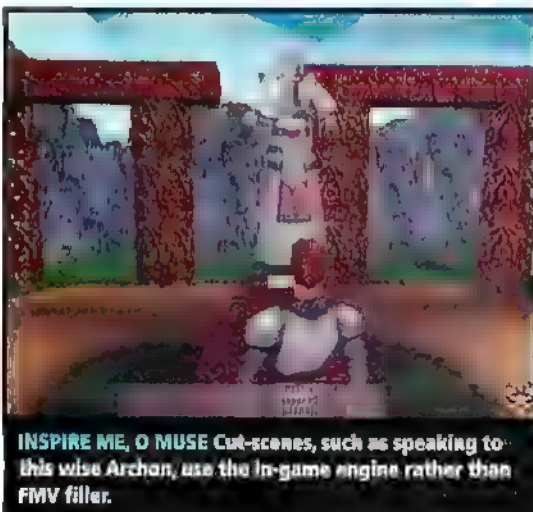
The main problem with *MASK* lies in its control scheme, which is a combination of keyboard and mouse control. The mouse controls the camera and interaction; the keyboard controls your movement and jumping.

I was able to remap the keys so that I could get a comfortable movement interface. What I *didn't* like was the controllable camera. You shift the camera around by holding down the right-button and then moving the mouse. That means the game never shifts camera angles for you. This gets very annoying, especially since combat often requires you to pause and then manipulate the camera to get a playable angle. Many times, I died in combat not from being outmatched but from having to pause to move the camera—and having those extra hits weaken me

enough to kill me. Sometimes, the camera even refused to move, which limited my viewing angle.

Another problem that will annoy users is the load times. Whenever you travel between worlds, the game will unload the current world and copy the new world from the CD onto your hard drive. Even on a hotrod PII/400 with lots of RAM, this took several minutes. If you play the game perfectly, you probably won't mind. But I imagine the average player will miss an item or two along the way and not realize it until later. This happened to me on occasion, and I had to jump around three worlds to locate items for a particular puzzle. One land, *Paradise Lost*, was so short that I spent more time loading it than being in it. I can only imagine the frustration these problems will cause for someone with a system that's closer to the minimum requirements.

Then there's some hardware goofiness. The game says it supports Direct3D, but it really wants a Voodoo2. Even if you've got a hotrod card like a RIVA TNT, you can't enable all the features like particles and shadows. If you have both a 3Dfx and a Direct3D card, it automatically selects the 3Dfx while completely graying out the Direct3D card.



**INSPIRE ME, O MUSE** Cut-scenes, such as speaking to this wise Archon, use the in-game engine rather than FMV filler.



**UP, UP, AND AWAY** This new adventure has epic-feeling events, such as riding on this Ice Dragon's back.

Thanks for giving users a choice, I guess.

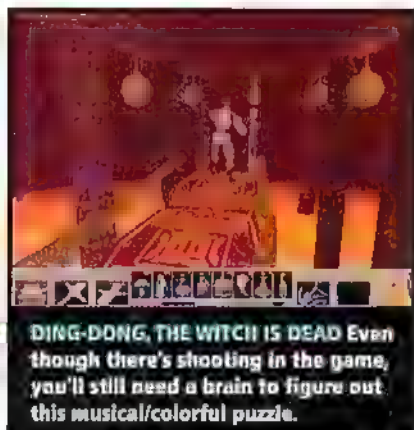
While the graphics look nice enough, they have a barrenness to them. There aren't many environmental details, and the fogging distance (the point where visibility is cut off) seems a bit short. Combine that with the sparse NPCs, and the worlds feel a bit...lonesome. In most of the worlds, it's also just too dark. Finally, the particle effects for spells and flames are very underwhelming. The character details are great (especially the lip-synching and animations as characters talk), but the environmental graphics are just adequate.

## Mixed Blessings

Despite these problems, I found myself playing this game a lot—

and enjoying it. There's just something appealing about thwacking monsters one moment and racking my brain with tough puzzles the next. These elements require an open mind before playing. The old-school puzzles may frustrate newbies, while the veterans may be annoyed at the jumping and the combat. If you're looking for a saccharin-sweet family adventure like the earlier games, don't go for this. But if playing an old-school adventure with lots of combat and a dash of RPG leveling seems fine for you, then get that sword and brain in gear and go save Daventry. **CGW**

*Thierry "Scooter" Nguyen fondly remembers playing a fiddle in the original KING'S QUEST, but if you question his masculinity, he'll challenge you to a HALF-LIFE brawl.*



**DING-DONG, THE WITCH IS DEAD** Even though there's shooting in the game, you'll still need a brain to figure out this musical/colorful puzzle.



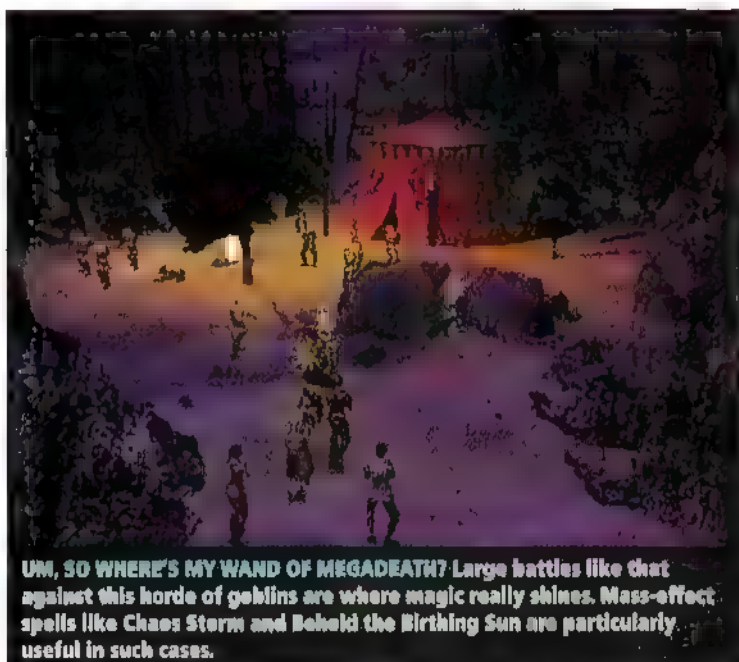
# Return to Vendor

*KRONDOR Makes Its Long-Awaited Return, But It's Not a Keeper*

by Petra Schlunk

**D**ynamix's *BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR*, set in fantasy author Raymond Feist's world of Midkemia, was one of the great role-playing games of all time. The game featured a world immense in scope, rich in story, and replete with many side quests. It also left many players hungering for a sequel. Now after years and years of delays, it's finally here—and it's not nearly the game that it could have been.

*RETURN TO KRONDOR* leaves the starting gate without a hitch. The game engine differs from that of its predecessor, which is not necessarily bad, and the storyline looks fine, promising some vague continuity with *BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR*,



**UM, SO WHERE'S MY WAND OF MEGADEATH?** Large battles like that against this horde of goblins are where magic really shines. Mass-effect spells like *Chaos Storm* and *Behold the Birthing Sun* are particularly useful in such cases.

with James ("Jimmy the Hand") now called Squire James and working for Prince Arutha in Krondor. The story turns upon the disappearance of an artifact of great power and the efforts made by both the villain and your party to recover it.

Sadly, the story—and the game itself—feels largely unfinished. Why? Maybe because the plot is too thin to stretch over the game's 10-plus chapters. Maybe because the story feels like the beginning of something much bigger, due to the deliberate insertion of elements that scream "future sequel." And maybe because the game is quite short—about 15–30 hours tops for an experienced gamer—even if you explore exhaustively.

## Scavengers Hunting

Chapters begin with a text introduction read by Pug, the mage from the original game (and one of the novels' main characters), providing continuity as the story evolves. Each chapter's goal is clearly stated. Players can move

have. Fortunately, party reconstruction is not as frequent or drastic as in *BETRAYAL*.

*RETURN TO KRONDOR* is played from a third-person perspective with a standard point-and-click interface, although you can also control most movement with your keyboard. The blocky but well-animated characters move around in front of an attractive, if often dark, cinematic backdrop, à la adventure games. What is difficult to get used to are the frequent and capricious changes in your viewpoint as you

travel—a very disorienting and maddening experience. Worse, important items, locations, and even deadly foes can occasionally be seen only by changing the camera angle, and the game is not kind about letting you know when to do this. Besides being disorienting, movement is slow even when your

directly through the story by accomplishing chapter goals. They can also take time to explore, find the lamentably few side quests, and gain experience. As is true of its parent, *RETURN TO KRONDOR* offers no control over who is in your party (which varies in size from one to four characters) or what skills and stats characters

travel—a very disorienting and maddening experience. Worse, important items, locations, and even deadly foes can occasionally be seen only by changing the camera angle, and the game is not kind about letting you know when to do this. Besides being disorienting, movement is slow even when your



**ALL TOGETHER NOW...PLEASE?** Inventory management is way too tedious; most items cannot be merged, even when you try to transfer, sell, or drop them.

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

★★★★☆

**APPEAL:** Feist fans and anyone else up for a fun, short, role-playing game with adventure game elements.

**PROS:** Cool combat system; lots of goodies; nice graphics complement a fairly engaging story and characters.

**CONS:** Too short; too linear; needlessly confusing and disorienting movement; poor inventory management; a terrible waste of great potential.

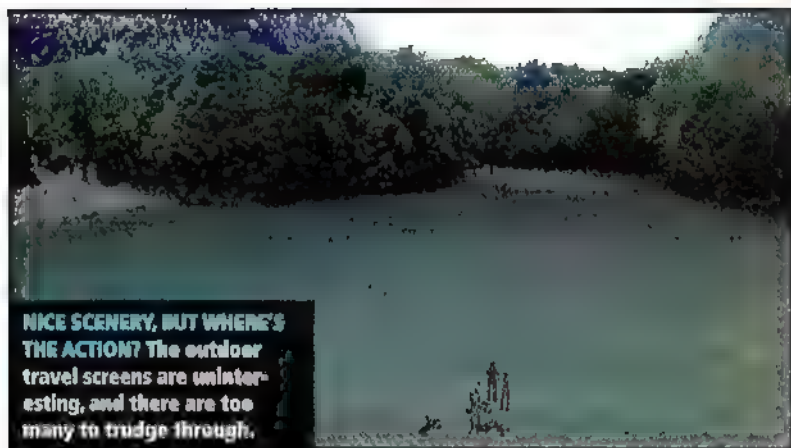
**DIFFICULTY:** Easy.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166, Windows 95/98, 24MB RAM, 190MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, SVGA-high color (16-bit color), Windows-compatible sound card, mouse.

**3D SUPPORT:** Direct3D

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** None

Price \$49.95  
Publisher Sierra Studios  
Bellvue WA  
(800) 757-7707  
[www.sierrastudios.com](http://www.sierrastudios.com)



**NICE SCENERY, BUT WHERE'S THE ACTION?** The outdoor travel screens are uninteresting, and there are too many to trudge through.

party is running. Similarly, movement is unpredictable during combat, boring outdoors—where you use a map to move through a nearly endless series of uninteresting screens—and challenging since it's often hard to tell that you can move in a particular direction at all. One convenient travel feature exists in a few areas that lets you move between locations with an overhead map.

### A Swing and a Hit

Fortunately, RETURN TO KRONDOR comes into its own in combat. The turn-based combat system provides an agreeable tension with *fate die rolls*. At the beginning of every combat round, a roll is made and the result offers an advantage, such as extra attacks, to one side or another for the upcoming round (akin to a paper role-playing game's roll for initiative). Otherwise combat is similar to that in most

other grid-based, tactical combat systems. Combatants can move about the battlefield to protect friends or attack specific foes, although the lack of a provision to highlight the battlefield's grid makes it difficult to plan movement and attacks. There is no fleeing from combat for either side; you cannot even reload during a battle. However, individual characters will not die as long as someone in the party survives combat.

Combat spells eventually become very powerful and should be your main concern as you allocate skill points when mages go up in levels. Sadly, spellcasters can cast spells only if they are wielding no weapon (this small fact is well hidden in the manual). That's a pity because your party eventually acquires a warrior-priest with awesome fighting skills and cool spells. You'll end up wasting one of this character's great assets, depending

on what sort of game you are playing (magic-oriented, fighter-oriented, or balanced) and how you like to play.

### Points of Disinterest

RETURN TO KRONDOR has lots of other notable points—bad and good. It features an

unwieldy inventory system that doesn't let you identify items before picking them up or merge items even when you transfer, drop, or sell them. Many screens are busy and downright ugly; the voice-acting is sometimes substandard; harder difficulty settings mostly lower the experience points you are awarded from combat, some fights are rigged in your favor; one chapter requires an outrageous amount of hot-spot hunting; and there are no subtitles available. Whew!

You can, however, play back important conversations using the journal feature; the number of saved games is limited only by disk space; the music is not irritating; there are some interesting puzzles; and there are so many potions and other healing options that your party will rarely need to rest for healing purposes, which keeps things moving.

### Return to Krondor or Electronic Boutique?

RETURN TO KRONDOR also has a ton of potentially cool stuff: the ability to create potions using alchemy, a nifty lock-picking system, lots of loot, and a myriad of spells. The caveat to most of these role-playing revelries is that they are not adequately

exploited. Most really good potions (including those that improve your weapons, defenses, or combat abilities) can be used only during combat and take an entire combat turn per potion to use. As soon as you start getting good at picking locks, you'll never have to do it again. Despite all the loot you find and sell, there is little of value in the game to buy. Beyond a few potions, scrolls, and other odd items, the only things worth buying are secret mage books, and you can buy these only through Chapter 3.

RETURN TO KRONDOR has tremendous potential, a good combat system, a fair story (for what there is of one), and a definite fun factor. However, it is completely underdeveloped, too



**BEHOLD THE TEMPLE OF PRANDUR** Visit this place often for cheap healing.



**HEY, WHERE'S BUFFY?** Vampire-slaying is one of your party's many tasks in RETURN TO KRONDOR.

short; shamefully unfinished in terms of its story; and far too linear, with very little to do besides follow the main story. If you're expecting anything remotely like the experience offered by BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR, you will be very disappointed. If all you want is a lightweight RPG for a long weekend, this game will serve you well. **EGW**

*Petra Schlunk, when not gaming, reads mysteries and keeps a watchful eye on both her three-year-old and the mounting snow around her Michigan home.*



# Glory Be?

Sierra FX Delivers a Final Farewell for the Fans—But We Still Want More

by Elliott Chin

For some of you, HERO'S QUEST might be nothing more than a faint, fond memory. For many others, the name rings no bells and conjures no memories at all. If you are in the latter group, then you missed out on one of the true sleepers of the past decade.

HERO'S QUEST was an adventure/RPG hybrid from Sierra On-Line that came out under its QUEST lineup, which included the KING'S QUEST and SPACE QUEST series. It differed from the other two series by virtue of its role-playing system and tactical combat, while still accommodating many adventure game-style mechanics, such as puzzles and character interaction.

HERO'S QUEST became QUEST FOR GLORY, and the series went onto four titles, all following the

adventures of the main character, appropriately named "Hero." With the conclusion of QUEST FOR GLORY IV, Sierra decided to abandon the franchise, but vehement fan protest has brought the series back for one final game. While QUEST FOR GLORY V isn't likely to win over anyone new, it will serve as a fond farewell for all those longtime fans who want to guide Hero through one last adventure.

## The King and I

QUEST FOR GLORY V. DRAGON FIRE plays much like the other games in the series. It's amazing that I could remember how the old games played, since the last time I touched a QUEST FOR GLORY game was more than four years ago (an eon in computer game time). Still, playing QUEST V was like riding a bike—I picked it up immediately. As the real farewell to the series, Lori and Corey (designers on all the QUEST games) have rounded up all the old characters and transported

them to the land of Silmaria, so the gang's all here for the last hurrah. Among the many familiar faces are your liontaur friend Rakeesh, the mage Erasmus, the minotaur Toro, child-turned-brigand leader Elsa von Spielburg, the shadowy Bruno, the dark master Katrina, and the fairy Erana.

As the game opens, the land of Silmaria faces a series of disasters. The Dragon of Doom, a massive creature that destroyed Atlantis and was subsequently banished

under a mountain, is awakened by a mysterious, evil figure. The seven pillars that bind the dragon to the mountain are being destroyed one by one. When the last one falls, the dragon will be free to burn Silmaria to ashes. And that's not all. Brigands

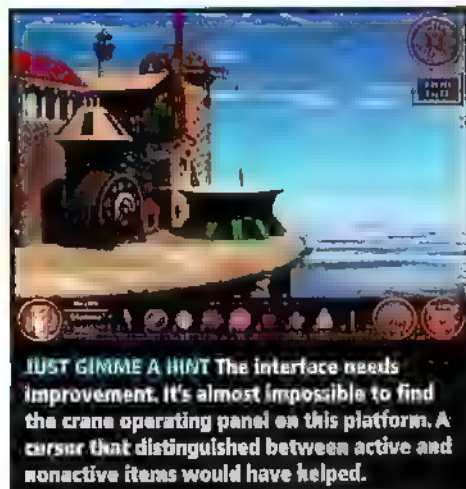
swarming from a base in the islands to the west have captured the fishing villages surrounding Silmaria. The tritons who live in the submerged husk of Atlantis are at war with Silmaria as well. To top this all off, the King of Silmaria has been assassinated.

Of course, all this danger is like a beacon to our Hero, and the mage Erasmus and the liontaur Rakeesh arrange for Hero to be entered into the Rites of Rulership, which determine who should be crowned the next king of Silmaria. Five contestants vie for the crown, but you have another purpose aside from the obvious. While the others are busy with the Rites, you'll be tracking down the assassin.

The Rites of Rulership constitute the game's seven major quests. Aside from these main quests, there also side quests that don't have to be completed—however, they will give you special items, open new lines of dialogue with NPCs, and add to your score. The first two quests are very straightforward, but the later quests are less linear. In some ways, this is



CLASS REUNION QUEST FOR GLORY V is Hero's final adventure, and all his old friends, including the liontaur Rakeesh, are here to say farewell.



## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** QUEST FOR GLORY fans and old-school adventure/RPG gamers.

**PROS:** Good story; plenty of quests; continually updating dialogue and characters; corny humor.

**CONS:** Pixel-hunting gameplay; sometimes awkward combat; bugs; average graphics.

**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166, Windows 95/98, 32MB RAM, 500MB hard-drive space, 6x CD-ROM drive, 1MB VGA graphics card, mouse, sound card.

**3D SUPPORT:** 3Dfx Glide.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** None.

Price \$49.95  
Publisher: Sierra FX  
Oakhurst, CA  
(800) 757 7707

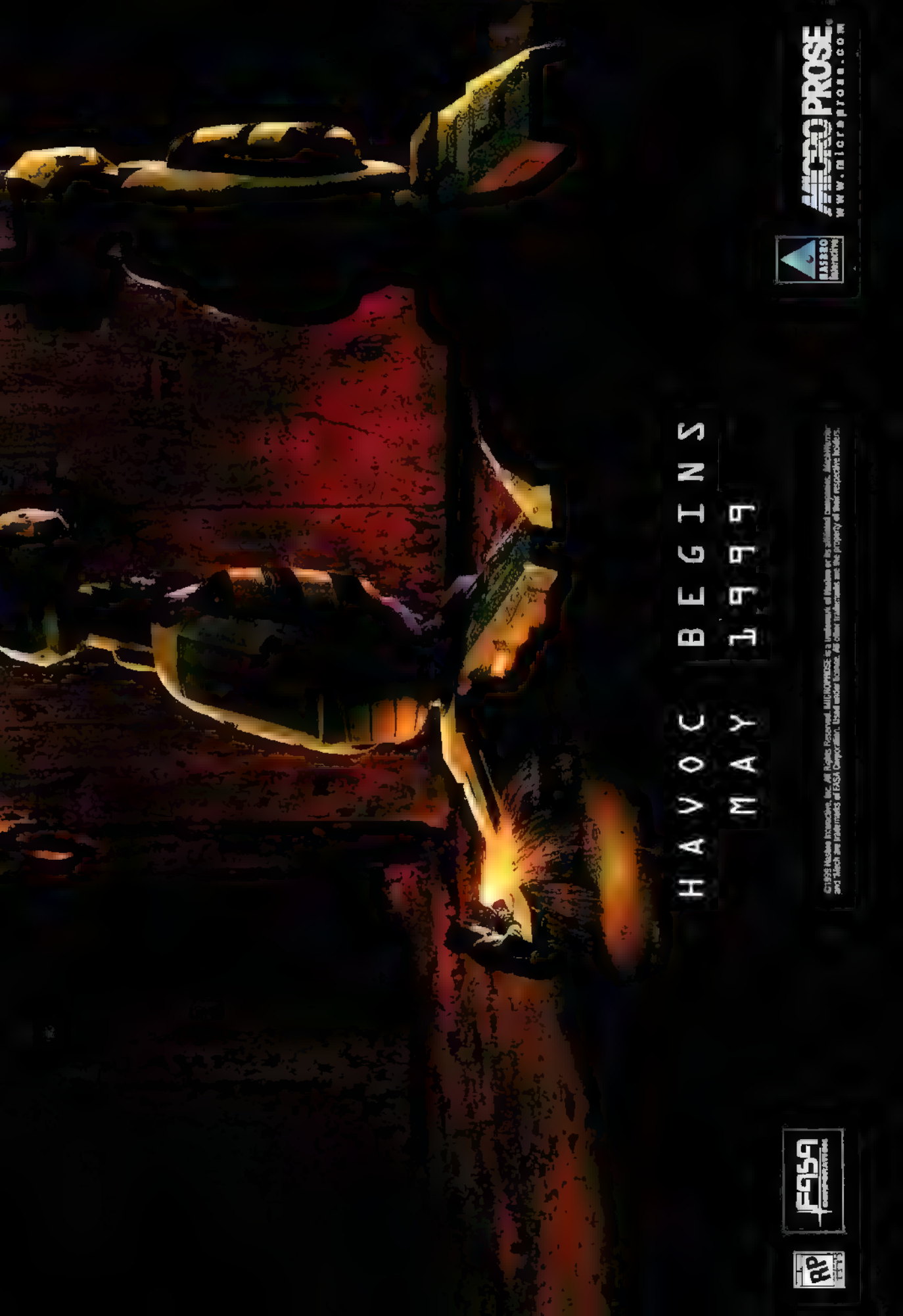
www.sierrafx.com





# MECH WARRIORS





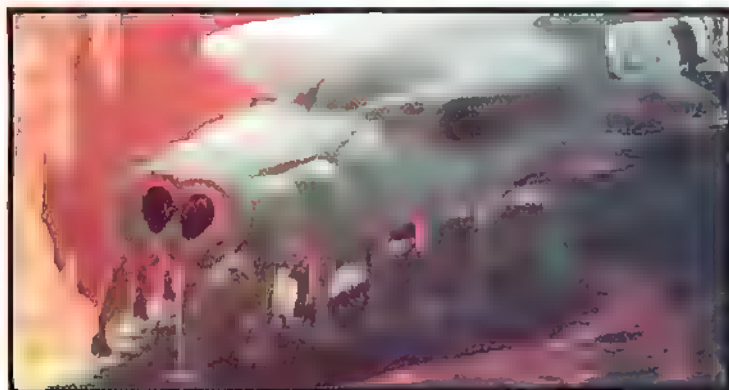
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**A HELLUVA TRIP** Although the gameworld is actually pretty small, your quests will take you to several fantastic locations, including Hades.

good. You are left to think up solutions on your own, and to find your own way of arriving at those solutions. Some quests are clever, but others will leave you wandering around the gameworld, lost and frustrated. The middle game, especially, feels too much like an adventure game in which you have to poke and prod at every single pixel, looking for certain items.

## She's Funny... and Funny-looking

While the plot, dialogue, and character interaction is very good, the graphics just aren't up to par. There is no 3D acceleration for Hero (who is polygonal), which makes him look blocky close-up. Some of the prerendered

backgrounds look nice, but others are too grainy for you to discern smaller objects on the screen (a problem when hunting for small items).

The humor and style of the previous QUEST games comes through wholly intact in this final chapter. QUEST FOR GLORY has always had a juvenile sense of humor with bad jokes and sexual innuendo. It's something that longtime fans have come to expect from the series, so I didn't mind it. However, were I not a fan of the series, I don't know if I would appreciate the game's humor. Some of the voice-acting was good, but other voices were strained and annoying (Cerberus is especially terrible). The music was good, with some excellent tracks and event-specific music.

Two of my biggest complaints about the game are the combat and the lack of a zoom feature. If

you are caught in a battle at the end of the map, you and your target are barely large enough to click on. (This is exacerbated by the Shrink spell.)

The interface makes the problem even worse. There's no distinguishing between "hot" items and useless

ones—a nightmare when you're trying to find a specific item or panel (like the crane operation panel on Science Island). The cursor should light up when you pass over items you can pick up, locations of interest, or enemies and characters.

## Real Role-playing

I do like that the game plays differently depending on which character you choose. Each class has a few extra quests and abilities, and solutions to certain puzzles and combat differ

depending on your character's abilities. This accentuates the role-playing aspect of the game and increases the potential for replay, if you can stomach some of the game's faults.

Overall, QUEST FOR GLORY is a pretty good game, but much of what fueled my desire to play the game was nostalgia. The game plays very much like what I remembered, but with added stories and the chance to revisit old acquaintances. That's what I wanted. However, gamers unused to QUEST FOR GLORY might be put off by the less-than-stellar graphics and "old-school" gameplay.

## Call Orkin

Gamers also might not want to put up with the bugs in

QUEST FOR GLORY V. I ran into a few, and people on the forums have complained about several others. Some bugs prevent the completion of certain side quests, while others will dump you out to the desktop. The promised multiplayer support is absent, as well, although a patch is supposed to enable it in the future.

I really enjoyed the first 10 hours of QUEST FOR GLORY V, but as the game wore on, I became more frustrated by the pacing of the game and the pixel-hunting. A better interface, a quest log that showed you what you had to do, and better handling of combat would have alleviated some of my concerns. The ending was a letdown.



**WHERE'S MY TELEPHOTO?** Combat suffers from a static camera that doesn't allow you to zoom in to facilitate combat.

As the final farewell to our Hero, this game should have at least included an epilogue of some sort that let you know what happened to Hero and all his companions. As it was, once I finished the game, I felt very disappointed. As a fan of the series, I want another game—one that fixes the problems and bugs of this one. Let's hope Sierra can be convinced to make another "farewell" to the series so that we can retire Hero with no regrets. **CGW**

*Elliott Chin is previews editor at GameSpot and he left Computer Gaming World because he heard we were implementing author bios. Still, he continues to write reviews for us.*



**THE FIRE NEXT TIME** This is the Dragon of Doom, and unless you complete all your quests, it could raze Silmaria just as it did to Atlantis centuries ago.



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Actual 3rd hole, Coeur d'Alene

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—Bill Reagan,  
General Manager,  
The Coeur D'Alene Resort



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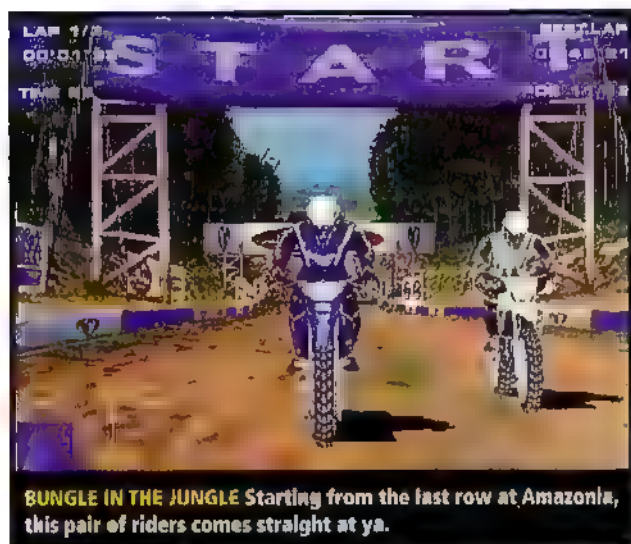
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[www.psygnosis.com/pro18/](http://www.psygnosis.com/pro18/)

# Warm Wheels

*MOTO RACER 2 Is a Smashing Good Time—but It's Not as Great as the Original*



by Gordon Goble

**M**OTO RACER 2 (MR2) is Electronic Arts' latest word on arcade superbike and motocross racing. It's fast and extremely invigorating, but at times you'll feel like a rubber-squealing pinball. However, it does feature some of the best racing graphics going outside of a coin-op machine. The catch is you'll need a knockout system to run it properly.

Developed by Delphine Software, MR2 is a study in unadulterated speed, snap-your-joystick corners, bone-crushing crashes, and big air. It's also a study in how tight tracks and dreaded invisible track-side boundaries can prevent a good game from being a great game.

## Death on Two Wheels

Like the original MOTO RACER, MR2 puts you on a powerful dirt bike or hyper-powerful superbike and thrusts you into take-no-prisoners action on an assortment of circuits suited to the chosen style of competition. Racing modes range from practice and time attack to single races and championships.

User preferences include weather, time-of-day, field size, number of laps, and a bounty of sound and display options.

Garages are notably absent, though you do have a choice of several bike configurations that highlight performance characteristics. You can tweak such things as brakes, grip, acceleration, and top speed. And believe me, you'd better make the right selection or you'll be smacking invisible boundaries or dropping out of the running halfway through the first lap. And it's those almost unavoidable collisions that form my one big complaint with the game.

The one true challenge of MR2

is keeping your steed within the sometimes excruciatingly narrow confines of the racing area and off those damned invisible boundaries. Make contact with a boundary in arcade mode and you'll slow to a crawl or bounce to the other side of the track; hit one in simulation mode and you'll be unceremoniously

dumped to the ground. To make matters worse, said force-field may protrude onto the racing surface, sit halfway back on a shoulder, or be built into a visible wall—you won't know until you get there.

With perseverance and a lot of experience you'll begin to appreciate all that MR2 has going for it. Visually, it's simply stunning. If your PC meets the rigid system specs, get ready for a solid and exceptionally detailed 3D world filled with color, convincing lighting and shadowing, and 3D-accelerated effects such as transparent smoke, water spray, lens flare, and more.

Ambient audio is in keeping with what you'd hear if you were crazy enough to do this in the real world. Unfortunately, the commentator is an example of coin-op annoyance, spouting pearls like "Yeah!" and "You're the last one."

## Road Rage

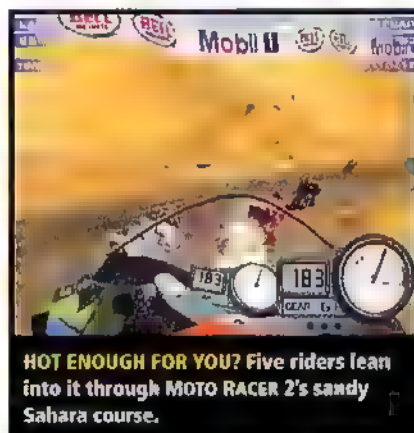
The racing? Well, it's wild, baby, with just one speed setting: fast. Superbike racing, especially in arcade mode, is a wickedly quick exercise, with just a hint of real-life subtlety and lots of breakneck racing, while simulation mode offers less forgiving, slightly more realistic corners. Motocross racing is a mixed bag. Collision detection isn't up to snuff, and the available stunt

possibilities are purely for your own enjoyment—they won't improve your score. Regardless of the mode, inclement weather has virtually no effect, and the artificially intelligent riders are anything but.

The tracks, meanwhile—though there are quite a few of them and they are certainly enhanced by MR2's extremely easy-to-use course editor—are too narrow and have a slight "cookie-cutter" feel.

Did Delphine miss the mark with MR2? Pretty much. The company set quite a benchmark with the first game, and MOTO RACER 2 just doesn't live up to that legacy. For a great motorcycle sim, find a copy of the first MOTO RACER. **CAW**

*Gordon Goble likes fast women and loose cars.*



## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** Motorcycle racing fans...

**PROS:** Pretty pictures, fast action; lots of racing modes and tracks; course editor

**CONS:** Lack of originality; lame commentary; barriers, narrow circuits.

**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166, Windows 95/98, 32MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, Direct Draw-compatible 2MB 2D video card or 4MB 3D accelerator board.

**3D SUPPORT:** 3dfx Voodoo1 & 2, Voodoo rush, Voodoo Banshee, Intel i740, nVidia RIVA 128 and RIVA TNT, Matrox G200, ATI 3D Rage Pro and Rage 128, 3D Labs Permedia, Rendition V2100.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** Serial or modem (2 players), LAN (2-8 players); 1 CD for host.

Price: \$44.95

Publisher: EA  
Redwood City, CA  
(800) 245-4525

[www.motoracer2.com](http://www.motoracer2.com)



# To the Curb!

*TEST DRIVE 5 Is a Racing Game That Looks Better Parked*

by Brett Todd

**A**s a Chrysler muscle-car buff from way back, I've been seriously looking forward to *TEST DRIVE 5*. I've never been much of a fan of the series, but getting the chance to virtually drive beauties like the '71 Hemi Barracuda, and the original '69 Dodge Charger Daytona has had my mouth watering for some time. Combine that with modern supercars like the Dodge Viper, Shelby Series 1, and Jaguar XJ220, and you've got all the makings of a great game...in theory, at least.

## Fun, Meet Brick Wall

If you could play *TEST DRIVE 5* by just looking at the box, you'd have a blast. The option list and car photos alone do a lot for the auto

aficionado. You'd need a parking garage to hold all of the available cars. With 28 licensed vehicles representing the cream of the automotive crop from the past 30 years, there's a lot to choose from. And there are 18 tracks to run these puppies on—far more than any other racing game.

Along with single events, you can take part in six cup circuits that include 4–12 races apiece; a drag race; and you can even play as a cop out to apprehend speeders. Multiplayer options include split-screen play and modem, serial, or LAN games.

Once you boot up the game, however, the problems begin. A poor physics model is the most obvious flaw. There is little difference between playing with a gamepad and playing with a wheel and pedals. In some ways I think that the gamepad provides more accurate control, which says it all. Vehicles tend to float—it just never seems like you have all four tires on terra firma, and quite often you don't. Make even the tiniest of oversteering errors and you'll either go up on two wheels or bounce around like one of the stunt cars from *Bulworth*.

Crashes are more annoying than anything else. Minor collisions often bounce you all over the road. The most inoffensive of side-swipes



**BABY ON BOARD?** One of the few cool things about *TEST DRIVE 5* is the carnage left in the wake of the competing cars.

will often push you onto the shoulder. Even the huge, heavy 'Cuda has little chance against relatively flimsy modern jobs like the Aston Martin Vantage. That is, as long as you're driving it. Reverse the roles and you'll find it impossible to spin out one of the computer-guided cars, or even push them out of the way. It's also impossible to accumulate damage. So feel free to spank that guard rail as much as you'd like.

Using automatic transmission is usually a bad idea in driving games, but *TEST DRIVE 5* takes this handicap to new lows. Shifting is ridiculously early, so you lose a lot of ground right off the mark. The PC also can't figure out what to do after a wipe-out. So instead of dropping into reverse to get away from that nasty rock-cut, you get to grind slowly past it in first gear. I've been stuck for as long as 30 seconds before just giving in and hitting the Escape key.

Video and audio also miss the mark.

The Direct3D-accelerated graphics are nice in spots, but are cluttered up with 2D sprites. Objects in the distance are flat, jagged, and appear out of nowhere. The game's sound is atrocious. The older cars sound like coffee grinders and the newer ones wouldn't make a sewing machine flinch.

As if all this isn't enough to dissuade you, Accolade has bought into the "lock it out and they'll play more" philosophy. Meaning that you have to put in a fair bit of time winning cups to enable all of the cars and tracks. What is the point of this? Locking out a large portion of the vehicles promised on the box is tantamount to fraud, since some buyers just won't be able to best all of the courses.

## Spin Out

*TEST DRIVE 5* fails on just about every level. Unless you're desperate for the muscle cars that have been inexplicably left out of EA's far-superior *NEED FOR SPEED III*, there's no need to buy this game. **CGW**

*Brett Todd still likes racing games, even after being forced to review this one.*

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

★★★★★

**APPEAL:** Good question.

**PROS:** Huge variety of tracks and cars included.

**CONS:** Oddly sedate gameplay; poor physics; locked out cars and tracks.

**DIFFICULTY:** Easy.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 133, Windows 95/98, 16MB RAM, 150MB free hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, DirectX-compatible sound card.

**3D SUPPORT:** Second-generation Direct3D-compatible cards (all major chipsets), 3Dfx Glide.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** LAN (2–6 players; 1 CD per player), hotseat (2 players)

Price: \$44.95

Publisher: Accolade  
San Jose, CA  
(408) 296-8400

www.accolade.com



**JUST SAY NYET** Barreling down Moscow streets at 100 MPH has its hazards.

# Into the Ditch

by Gordon Goble

Let's see...snip the cord that leads to my joystick, blow up my computer, smash my fingers with a hammer, or burn the disk beyond recognition, encase it in cement, and drop it off a tall bridge. There's just gotta be some way to ensure that I never again mistakenly engage in another depressing bout of TEST DRIVE OFF-ROAD 2 (TDOR 2).

The game offers just one 150MB install option, a minuscule manual, and no online help. On the game's Options menu, there are no options. Well, nearly. You do get three difficulty settings, some audio adjustments, and of course, oh-so-important menu language and speedometer readout preferences. Oh yeah, there's also a Default View setting, though it works on a numerical

system only, leaving you wondering just which view a "1," "3," or "6" signifies. As it turns out, all but one are variations on a rear chase perspective, and the one that isn't is a front bumper cam—there are no



cockpit views. You can't alter graphics, race distances, or rules. You can't custom assign buttons on your controller, unless it has its own external programming utility. There's no garage or upgrade shop.

All this and I haven't even talked about driving. That's because there isn't much to it. The game offers

arcade depictions of 20 licensed real-life off-road vehicles and a dozen courses, although most cars and circuits are unlocked only with winning rides.

Though it's supposedly an "off-road" game, the tracks are enclosed, with visible boundaries and invisible force fields forcing strict adherence to recognized thoroughfares. Most of the terrain consists of huge and ugly patterned chunks of texture repeated over and over. Obstacles are strewn about each circuit to impede your progress, though you can drive right through many of them.

You can bang up against a cliffside or other boundary only to have it disappear completely, getting an unfettered view of the landscape behind it. Vehicles feature no damage modeling in either a visual or practical sense and do not come equipped with rear-view mirrors.

All in all, it's a new low for the

TEST DRIVE series and for racing games in general. **CGW**

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**APPEAL:** Masochistic racing fans.

**PROS:** Lots of tracks and vehicles, jolting ride.

**CONS:** Amateur interfaces; virtually no user settings; many more.

**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 133 (with 3D card) or P200 (no 3D card), Windows 95/98, 16MB RAM, 150MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, DirectX6-compatible sound card, DirectX6-compatible graphic card.

**3D SUPPORT:** 3Dfx.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** LAN.

Price \$39.95

Publisher: Accolade, Inc.  
(800) 245-7744

[www.accolade.com](http://www.accolade.com)

## REVIEW • NEWMAN/HAAS RACING

# Off the Wall

by Gordon Goble

Supporting horrendous car control, comical collisions, and embarrassingly shabby commentary, NEWMAN/HAAS just doesn't cut the mustard.

With 11 real-life tracks—most of which are part of the CART series—and 16 real-life drivers and cars, developer Studio 33 has gone to some lengths to ensure an authentic flair. Terms such as CART and Indy are avoided, and certain sponsors are absent, but it's as close to a CART-sanctioned title as you're gonna get without the actual licensing.

Visually, NEWMAN/HAAS is actually impressive and at first quite believable. Though distant objects tend to "sparkle" a bit, the cars and circuits look great, tire smoke is pretty and structures and other

trackside scenery have a real sense of completion.

Sadly though, it's a downhill ride from there. Driving is an exercise in



frustration. Feel the wrath of the omnipresent emergency brake as you accelerate from a stop or decelerate to one. Pendulum suddenly into a wall or competitor as you zig-zag down a straightaway. Experience the horror of the non-turning NEWMAN/HAAS physics model should you attempt to any

corner at any sort of decent speed. I kid you not—it's that quirky.

Adding to the terror, the tranny shifts automatically down to 1st while the camera does a disorienting reverse zoom at just the slightest hint of contact. Worse still, even the most severe of collisions results in little more than a bumper car-type bounce and the upheaval of a few spare polygons—until the sixth or so such incident that is, at which point a

real part such as a tire might pop off before you are summarily dismissed from the event.

The game won't let you drive as yourself, refuses to allow custom controller configuration, and permits menu navigation only through a bunch of weird keys. The voice commentary is beyond bad. Shall I

continue? I think not. Next exit: the junkyard. **CGW**

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**APPEAL:** Arcade racing fans.

**PROS:** Inspiring graphics.

**CONS:** Bizarre handling; ridiculous crash modeling; nonsensical commentary.

**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 133, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive, DirectSound-compatible sound card, 3D accelerator card.

**3D SUPPORT:** 3Dfx.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** LAN (2-8 players); 1 CD per player.

Price \$44.99

Publisher: Psygnosis  
800-245-7744

[www.newman-haas.com](http://www.newman-haas.com)



# It's a Strike!

*Adrenalin Entertainment Rolls a Great, but Not Perfect, Game*

by Scott A. May

Let's be brutally honest: In the wide, wide world of sports, bowling probably ranks up there with foosball and air hockey on the list of fashionable indoor recreation. Fine, that just leaves more open lanes for the rest of us.

But in the appreciably smaller world of PC bowling sims, Adrenalin Entertainment's **BRUNSWICK CIRCUIT PRO BOWLING** easily stands head and shoulders above anything that's come before it. Which isn't much, so you've got to take what you can get.

I'll admit to having a bad taste in my mouth since Adrenalin's horrific Windows port of its outstanding PlayStation bowling game, **TEN PIN ALLEY**. The graphics were awful and the control was



**BRAINS, NOT BEAUTY** The graphics in **CIRCUIT PRO BOWLING** may be average, but the ball and pin physics are spectacular.

total junk. Luckily, Adrenalin redeems itself, more or less, with this fine simulation.

## Everything but the Smell

Up to six players can compete on a single machine or network, choosing from a nice selection of game modes: exhibition, tournament, skins game, career, and Cosmic Bowl. There's also an excellent practice mode, where you can exercise your release or spin sans pins, or work on those maddening spares using the pin setter. Career mode is great for compiling stats and tracking your progress (or decline). Cosmic Bowl is a novelty designed to induce flashbacks, featuring neon lanes and glow-in-the-dark balls and pins. Groovy.

Your bowling alter-ego can be created from scratch, including three levels of difficulty, bowling hand, and sundry physical options. You can also bowl as, or against, up to five real-life professional bowlers, such as Mike Aulby, Curtis Odom, Steve Jaros, and Chris Barnes. Although THQ swears there are 13 pro bowlers in this circuit, I could find only 8 on the menu. Each digital pro simulates the same style and attributes as their

real-world counterparts. Not that most of us would know.

Other setup options include the choice of six authentically simulated Brunswick bowling balls, from the wickedly fast Speed Demon to the ultimate pin killer, the Quantum Raven. If you're a rookie bowler, learning the subtle graces of each ball is one of the game's great pleasures. There are also 15 bowling clubs from which to choose, ranging from Akron, Ohio, to Munich, Germany. The main difference between each location is the oil pattern, pyramid, top hat, ramp, flat, and blend used to coat the lanes. Oil patterns directly affect release, ball traction, spin, and pin action.

When you finally hit the lanes,

you're greeted by surprisingly simple controls for stance, aiming, spin, backswing, and release. **CIRCUIT PRO BOWLING** uses a three-click horizontal meter system for approach, power, and release, controlled via mouse or keyboard. Although I hate twitch-and-click

sports sims based on reaction time instead of skill, I'll make an exception because this one is so smooth.

The best thing about this game is its realistic ball and pin action. It looks great, but feels even better. Bowling is a tactile sport, and this sim feels just right. All this realism is backed up by fast, smooth animation, accompanied by crisp sound samples and a terrific frame-by-frame replay feature. Bowler animation is also smooth. The mirrored surface of the polished lanes (3D hardware only) is a killer effect.

## Boy's Club

Despite all these strikes, **CIRCUIT PRO BOWLING** rolls its share of gutter balls. The most glaring is the lack of female bowlers, and to a lesser extent, juvenile bowlers. In one of the few mixed-gender pro sports, such an omission is staggering. Other complaints include lackluster use of 3D accelerated graphics, spotty texturing, and lack of a recorded play feature, à la **LINKS**.

That said, **BRUNSWICK CIRCUIT PRO BOWLING** is still the best bowling simulation yet for the PC. Adrenalin and Brunswick are reportedly already at work on a sequel. Next time, let's hope they include the ladies. **CGW**

*Scott May once worked as a pin monkey, but swears he's never used alley balls or rental shoes. Right.*



**PURPLE HAZE** For a change of pace, try your hand at **Cosmic Bowl**, with black-light balls, pins, and garish colors galore.

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

★★★★★

**APPEAL:** Bowling fans of all ages.

**PROS:** Ultra-realistic ball and pin physics, great practice area; large selection of game types and lane patterns to choose from; fast action; excellent instant replay.

**CONS:** No female bowlers, spotty texture mapping; no recorded games; overall poor use of 3D hardware capabilities.

**DIFFICULTY:** Easy.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Windows 95/98, Pentium 133 or faster, 3MB hard drive space, 16MB RAM, 1MB of VRAM (4 MB VRAM if 3D accelerated), 4x CD-ROM drive, mouse, supports all Windows-compatible sound cards.

**3D SUPPORT:** ATI Rage Pro, 3Dfx.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** TCP/IP (2-6 players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$34.95

Publisher: THQ, Inc.  
Carlsbad, CA  
(818) 225-5167

www.thq.com

# Mad Max Redux

*Slide Your Way Around Turns and Into the Apocalyptic Future*

by Brett Todd

**E**arly in the 21st century, the ozone layer melts away, frying everything green and groovy above ground. Wars over the few remaining resources ensue. Six billion people bite it and the few survivors move underground. The good news? All those dead folks left behind some really cool cars. With entertainment in scarce supply, joyriders slap together some powerful machines and hit the desert for some rip-roaring fun. Within a few years, they've been coined "Powersliders" and a semi-pro racing circuit has been established. That's the story behind POWERSLIDE, a futuristic racing game well-worth the attention of almost any arcade racing buff.

## Slip-slidin' Away

The object of POWERSLIDE is straightforward: Win races by any means possible. As you might expect, there is a lot of power-sliding into and out of turns. So get used to slamming on that hand-brake. Actual gaming options include time trials, solo races, and championships. There are four difficulty settings, ranging from easy to insane, although these only



**AHHH, SO THAT'S WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE** Capturing screens and then looking back on what you just did is about the only way to appreciate the fast-moving graphics in POWERSLIDE.

affect the smarts and aggression of the computer drivers.

Once you decide on a challenge, you pick a vehicle. Each is rated in a number of different categories according to power, speed, traction, and so on. Then you take on the role of a specific character. Along with the fairly detailed plot that sets things up, there are also more than a dozen drivers provided, complete with goofy bios. This gives the title a lot of personality, though it makes little difference as to how the game plays out.

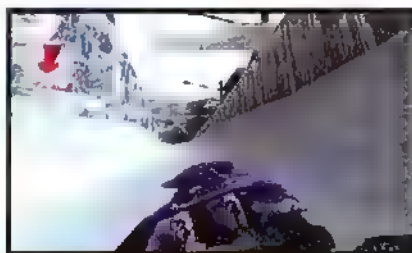
## Classified Information

Perhaps the biggest problem with POWERSLIDE is how to categorize it. Due to the futuristic backstory, you'd have to call it an arcade racer, but that belittles what the developers, Ratbag, have accomplished by way of accurate physics. Cars roll with the dunes, and tires respond exactly as they should—meaning you immediately feel the difference between asphalt and sand. There's a great sensation of speed whether you're just blasting dead-ahead or powersliding your

way into a tunnel. It's impossible to say exactly how a late 21st century car would handle on UV-ravaged soil and smashed-up highways, but this seems like a damn good guess.

Unfortunately, it's somewhat debatable as to whether this is a good thing, since you're almost always losing control. Short of cheat codes, there is no way to dial down the physics. Ratbag just tosses you into the deep end, and things can be frustrating. Losing both the back end and most of your momentum on the turns is nothing short of maddening.

All of this is exacerbated by the courses, which are nothing more than a collection of suicide curves. You're always heading into a hairpin or driving through one. This leads to some pretty frenetic, exciting gameplay, but only for a while.



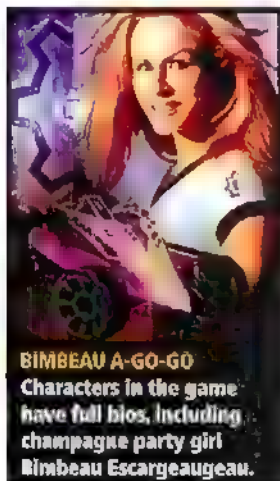
**UH, CAN I GET OUT AND WALK?** The other tracks have nothing on the bonus luge course.

Everything gets repetitive once you realize that the whole challenge consists of flooring it on the few straightaways and using the hand-brake to slide your way into turns. You're also never more than one misstep away from last place.

## Throw Away the Key

It's not great, but despite the flaws, POWERSLIDE is one of those games that you can't stop playing. Don't expect much in the way of longevity, but you really couldn't ask for more of an intense arcade experience. This is a very good first game, and I only hope that enough people take notice of it to warrant Ratbag doing a sequel. **CGW**

*Brett Todd is actively looking forward to the apocalypse so that he can finally use his Charlton Heston impersonation. "They did it! They blew it up! You maniacs!"*



**BIMBEAU A-GO-GO** Characters in the game have full bios, including champagne party girl Bimbeau Escargeaugeau.

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** Arcade racing fans.

**PROS:** Great visuals; deep story and characterization

**CONS:** No difficulty settings; slippery physics; much of the game initially locked out.

**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 133 MMX, Windows 95/98, 16MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM, 20MB hard drive space, Hi-Color video card, DirectSound-compatible sound card.

**3D SUPPORT:** Second generation Direct3D-compatible cards (all major chipsets), 3Dfx Glide

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** IPX, TCP/IP, modem (2-12 players), 1 CD per player.

Price: \$34.99

Publisher: GT Interactive  
New York, NY  
(425) 398-3074

www.gtgames.com



# Winning the Space Race

*ALPHA CENTAURI Is Great Stuff, Even by Sid Meier's Standards*



by Tim Carter

Over the years—and especially after the megahit *SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION II*—gamers have come to expect a lot from Sid Meier and Brian Reynolds. Even with the sky-high expectations for the designing duo's latest project, *SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI*, it's likely that few gamers will be disappointed. *ALPHA CENTAURI*, a Brian Reynolds design, is an obvious (albeit unofficial) continuation of the *CIVILIZATION* series, complete with all the deep, addictive gameplay of that magnum opus for turn-based strategy games.

*CIV II* veterans will therefore have little difficulty understanding the game interface or the basic

game system. Players are faced with the classic challenge of building an empire on a largely unknown planet while competing with six other factions. (The seven factions are all refugees from the spaceship launched at the end of *CIV II*, and each faction adheres to a different Earth philosophy.) Yet *CIV*-philes would be well advised to pay attention to the pop-up tutorials that begin running when a game is started, since much has changed beneath the surface.

## New Planet, New Challenges

Life in another star system is quite different from life on Earth, and the unknown planet and its inhabitants present players with a different and much more subtle set of challenges than Earth did in *CIV II*. For instance, in *ALPHA CENTAURI* the environment and your relationship with it greatly affect your strategies for success. Pollution has

been rolled into a generic environmental damage rating for each city. Incongruity with the planet will bring on a host of problems, from destroyed facilities to hostile "brain worms" to increased growth of suffocating fungal foliage.

You can turn these problems into assets through better environmental technology, or you can engage in slash-and-burn, pollute-and-strip-mine strategies of economic growth. Don't expect the planet to stand idly by if you choose the latter course, however.

Along with a more active relationship with the environment, your faction now has many more

ways to mold the planet to your liking. Terraforming units can radically alter the terrain, which in turn can affect weather patterns and the food and resources available to your cities.

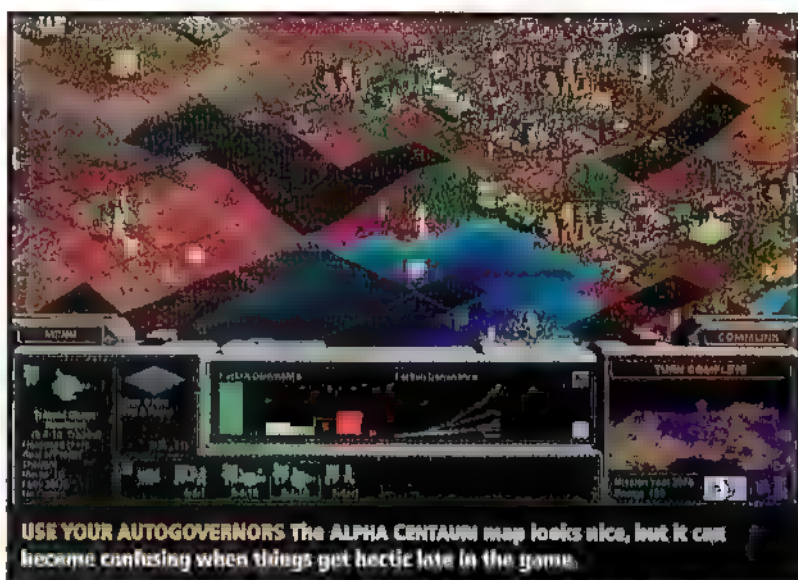
Once the planetary United Nations is convened and the requisite technology is available, factions

or coalitions can also undertake to raise or lower entire oceans, greatly altering the map, the weather, and, obviously, your cities.

## Machiavelli Wanted

If the environment has taken on a new significance, so too has politics. Through a social engineering menu, you may customize the ideology of your faction (based on the doctrines developed by your researchers) to meet your economic, social, and military needs. Be careful, however, as rival factions may find your political ideas highly threatening. A dangerous ideology can lose you allies and create enemies very quickly.

When you establish a base, the surrounding territory automatically accrues to your empire. The computer demarcates your borders based on the locations of your bases and proximity of competing bases. Borders, shown as a dotted line on the game map, allow for a more controlled diplomatic situation than was the case in *CIV*. You can and must defend your borders, and during peacetime you can expect them to be respected by others. Of course, you violate the



**USE YOUR AUTOGOVERNORS** The *ALPHA CENTAURI* map looks nice, but it can become confusing when things get hectic late in the game.



**NEW PLANET POLITICS** Customizing your political system is a key to success, but beware of getting into unnecessary ideological conflicts with your allies.

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

★★★★★

**APPEAL:** All strategy gamers, but especially *CIVILIZATION* and MOO fans.

**PROS:** Wonderful "hard" sci-fi setting; tough, adaptable AI; challenging environment; subtle diplomacy system—a quality game through and through.

**CONS:** Somewhat long endgame on large maps—that's about it.

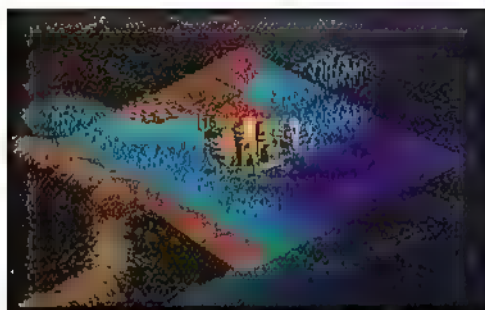
**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 133, Windows 95/98, 16MB RAM, 100MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, SVGA, DirectX-compatible sound and graphics cards.

**3D SUPPORT:** None.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** Modem (2 players), TCP/IP or LAN (2–7 players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$49.95  
Publisher: Firaxis/EA  
San Mateo, CA  
(800) 245-4525  
www.ea.com



**SALTWATER CITY** Bases may now be built on land or sea. If the council votes to increase global temperatures, look for some of your land bases to become sea bases—or submerged ruins—in a hurry.

sovereignty of others at your peril as well.

As with cities in CIV, your bases house your population and serve as the economic centers of your empire. While restrictions on population and growth still exist, new technology will offer successful factions the chance to build much larger and more powerful cities—although supercities can be somewhat vulnerable to economic dirty tricks during wartime.

While the structures available obviously differ, the growing and maintaining of population centers hasn't changed much since CIV II. Your people must be kept happy in order to be productive, and they can be shifted into various specialties when necessary. Energy, nutrients, and minerals are the currency of ALPHA CENTAURI. They comprise the main commodities that your bases must produce. Population growth and the production of buildings and military units happen much as they did in CIV II (see "Military Options Galore" sidebar).



**MY OWN PIECE OF LAND** Bases still form the core of your economy and function much as cities did in CIV II.

The designers of ALPHA CENTAURI clearly put a lot of thought into the construction of the game's technology

tree. Because the technology advancements don't have the cachet of history to give them context or emotional pull, it's a credit to the design team that after a few games one begins to anticipate certain key technologies almost as much as one did in CIV. At the same time, the distribution of abilities over the technology tree seems a lot more balanced, with no single technology offering the massive advantages that, for instance, the railroad gave to gamers in both CIV and CIV II.

Along with a very detailed manual (running to more than 250 pages), ALPHA CENTAURI comes with extensive online help and well thought-out tutorials. My version of the game ran smoothly, with no significant technical glitches or bugs. I did find the map somewhat hard to read in some circumstances (particularly in crowded battle situa-

tions) and would have liked more precise descriptions of the benefits of various structures on the buying and research screens.

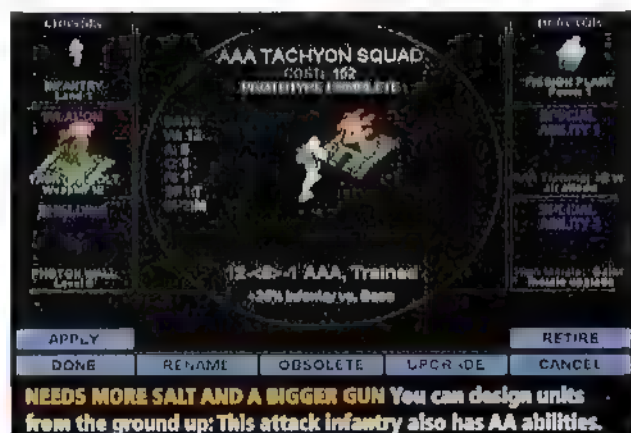
The AI in ALPHA CENTAURI is quite clever. At higher difficulty levels, players

can expect to be given a serious run for their money. Your own bases and terraforming units can also be placed under computer control. While the computer does an adequate job of running your economy, it tends to operate along generic growth principles that may not fit with the exact needs of your overall strategy. Once you tire of this, you can vie for dominance with up to six other humans via LAN or Internet in a very stable simultaneous turn-based environment.

The only fault I could find with ALPHA CENTAURI is that—as with

most exploration, exploitation, and extermination games—gameplay is sometimes protracted long after a winner has been determined. The problem of overlong endgames has been greatly reduced from CIV II, but on a huge map can be somewhat taxing. Still, this is a small price to pay for an otherwise stellar game that will have players wasting time well into the wee hours. **CGW**

*Tim Carter won't be done with ALPHA CENTAURI for a while, but he has promised to take breaks periodically to finish GRIM FANDANGO and HALF-LIFE.*



## Military Options Galore

While combat in ALPHA CENTAURI may seem at first glance to be highly reminiscent of CIV and CIV II, significant changes in the construction of units gives army building and use an entirely new dimension. Here, you may design your units from a customized construction screen. Even though a wide range of weapons and armor are at your disposal, I generally found myself using the most up-to-date systems available.

The design component really shines in the assigning of special attributes. Each unit you design may have one or two additional abilities. Faced with an enemy who likes to use air power? You could build interceptors and spend a lot of time and energy chasing down those attacking bombers. Or you can endow your basic infantry garrison units with SAM anti-aircraft defenses.

You can also build a huge army of cannon-fodder type units (remember to use the "no support needed" special attribute to overwhelm a technologically superior enemy. Morale also plays a significant role in determining the strength of your army. Untried troops can suffer up to a 50 percent loss in strength, while elite troops gain significant bonuses. The combination of factors affecting troop strength, and their ability to influence all of them, gives gamers unprecedented control over the type and composition of their armed forces.



# Mythic Proportions

*MYTH II: SOULBLIGHTER Is a Mighty Successor to a Great Game*

by Robert B. Marks

**P**With an incredible mixture of story and tactics, MYTH: THE FALLEN LORDS raised the bar of strategy gaming considerably and snagged CGW's 1997 Strategy Game of the Year award to boot. Following such a groundbreaking game is no simple task, but by introducing exciting new game elements, enriching the graphics, and streamlining the interface, MYTH II: SOULBLIGHTER easily meets the high standard set by its predecessor.

MYTH II opens 60 years after the defeat of The Fallen Lords, and the



**GHOST TOWN** One of SOULBLIGHTER's coolest missions occurs in a haunted cave, where spectral warriors attack your troops.

kingdom of Munthemne has enjoyed a rare period of peace and prosperity under the rule of King Alric. But nothing good lasts forever. A small group of soldiers, investigating reports of grave-robbing in nearby Willow Creek, finds itself facing a group of undead, thus marking the dawn of a new and devastating war against the darkness. The final confrontation with the risen Fallen Lord, Soulblighter, awaits.

Like its predecessor, MYTH II is primarily a tactical game set in a lush, well-rendered world. But what a world it is this time around. Wildlife now graces the forests and

grasses, and the landscape is rendered in resolutions up to 1024x768. Windmills spin lazily in a slight breeze, and some missions require drawbridges to be lowered and doors to be opened.

## Move It or Lose It

The addition of movable objects such as drawbridges brings a whole new dimension and level of challenge to the inventive set of missions—sieges, escort missions, defense assignments, indoor assaults, and one standout in which disappearing and reappearing ghosts bedevil you in a cave. Fortunately, you'll have new units well suited to meeting these challenges, including Warlocks who fire devastating fireballs, sturdy Heron Guards, and mortar-lobbing Dwarves. Perhaps

the biggest tactical advancement is the use of fire—bowmen can now shoot flaming arrows to set the ground ablaze.

Of course, the other side has some new things to throw at you as well. Gamers can expect to face cannon fire and some deadly new monsters, including the werewolflike Myrkridia, brutal Mauls, and the undead Stygian Knights.

Multiplayer options have been expanded

with three new types of games: Assassin, Stampede, and Hunting. In Assassin, players compete to assassinate the baron of the opposing team. Stampede and Hunting both involve the game's wildlife: In Stampede, the object is to move your herd to the enemy flags; Hunting involves the killing of any available wildlife.



**FLAME ON!** The use of fire adds new strategic elements to gameplay. Here a group of archers use a barrage of flaming arrows to cover a dwarf's retreat.

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**



**APPEAL:** Strategy gamers and fans of MYTH: THE FALLEN LORDS.

**PROS:** Refined gameplay and environment; new units; good story; map and character editors.

**CONS:** Some inconsistencies in gameplay and story; some AI flaws; incomplete tutorial.

**DIFFICULTY:** Advanced.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 133, Windows 95/98/NT 4.0 (Service pack 3), 32MB RAM, 100MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, DirectX 6.0 compatible video and sound, mouse, 28.8-Kbps modem for Internet play.

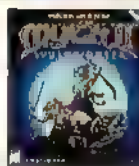
Macintosh, 100MHz PowerPC G01, System 7.5, 32MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM, 16-bit color, mouse, 28.8 Kbps modem for Internet play.

**3D SUPPORT:** Direct3D, 3Dfx, and Rendition.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** Direct TCP/IP connection, Appletalk (Mac only), LAN, Internet via bungee net (2-16 players); one CD per player.

Price \$49.95  
Publisher: Bungie  
Chicago, IL  
(312) 255-9600

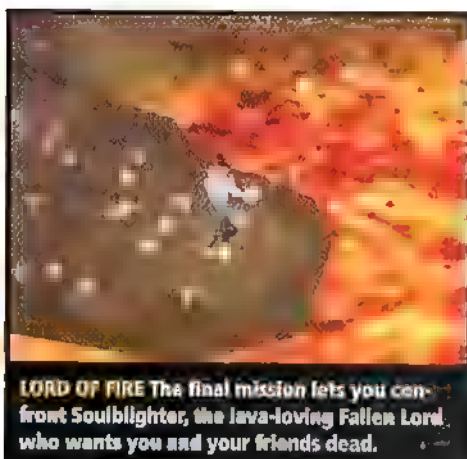
www.bungie.com



**CANUS HORRIBILIS** The werewolflike Myrkridia, only hinted at in MYTH, make their savage debut in MYTH II.



**INTERIOR DEVASTATION** MYTH II's more complex game environments let you take the battle indoors.



**LORD OF FIRE** The final mission lets you confront Soulblighter, the lava-loving Fallen Lord who wants you and your friends dead.

### No Obscene Gestures

For some gamers, the biggest challenge in MYTH was getting a handle on the interface, particularly the "gesture-click" commands for unit facing. While the original interface is still there for MYTH veterans, everything—unit facing and camera movement especially—can be handled easily with the mouse. A handy control bar at the bottom of the screen makes unit commands and formations a one-click snap, and a dialog box can be called to get mission objectives and hints for each level.

Best of all for the legions of die-hard fans, Bungie has included its mission and unit editors, FEAR and LOATHING. FEAR allows gamers to change the parameters of the

gameworld, from unit strengths to the physics of waterfalls, while LOATHING can be used to alter existing maps or create new ones. These powerful tools finally allow the gamer to alter the environment.

### Hit or Myth

This is not to say that MYTH II is perfect. The unit pathfinding, while improved, is still faulty. Also, units can sometimes disobey orders and not change targets when asked (which, if it is a Dwarf or Warlock, can cause some problems with friendly fire). There is also a minor bug that causes a disappearing mouse in the multiplayer screens.

The tutorial is also problematic. While it serves as a good introduction to a new unit (the Warlock), it

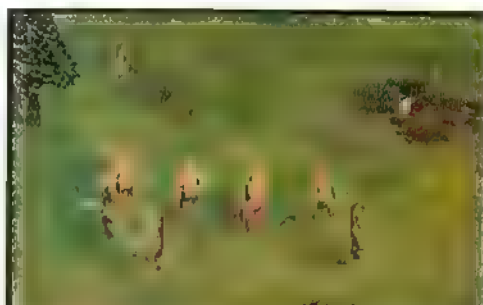
does not introduce any others. And while it introduces the gamer to the keyset used by MYTH: THE FALLEN LORDS, it does not deal with the new mouse-view movement or the control bar. The manual also falls somewhat short in explaining the magic system.

There are also some oversights in game consistency, both with the story and missions. As in MYTH, every mission is

introduced with a journal entry. In some cases, however, the journal entry has only a tenuous connection to the mission. Bungie also made a puzzling choice at the end of the game. In the penultimate mission, Alric has an incredibly powerful magic sword; in the final mission, however, Alric has left this sword behind. While this makes the final mission quite challenging, it does not make a great deal of sense.

In the end, these flaws prove to be relatively minor. MYTH II is a standout game and certainly worth playing. Bungie has taken the predecessor, refined it, and created a very worthy sequel. **CGW**

*Robert B. Marks is a fourth-year student of medieval history and literature at Queen's University.*



**REDNECK RAMPAGE** A secret level lets you load up some heavy-duty blunderbusses and take some good ol' boys deer hunting.

# MYTH AND THE Medieval Battlefield

Both MYTH and MYTH II are remarkable games because, unlike almost every other real-time strategy game, they come extremely close to reproducing the actual conditions of medieval battle. Any battle, by nature, is a changing dynamic, making good use of manpower and high ground imperative.

The bowmen in both titles are very close to their actual medieval equivalents. The most famous archers are longbowmen, considered to have originated in Wales. The Welsh longbow was able to punch a hole through an oak door at a relatively long range. The continental equivalent, the crossbow, was even

more powerful, but slow to use and shorter ranged.

The berserks are similar to the Norse berserkers. The berserkers appeared during the Viking wars of the 9th and 10th centuries and were renowned and feared for their skill in combat. They fought in a rage wearing animal skins or nothing at all, and usually used axes or swords. The speed and ferocity of the berserks in MYTH mirror the frightening savagery of their real-life inspiration.

While there are no real comparisons to be made to the Dwarven units, the new Dwarven Mortars actually have a medieval counterpart,

albeit tenuous, in the form of cannons that appeared in the 14th century for siege warfare.

The MYTH games miss the mark with the warriors, however. Infantry of the Middle Ages used polearms and axes. The sword was extremely expensive and was generally used only by the nobility before the 15th century.

One element of the authentic medieval battlefield is missing entirely, and that is the knighthood. The knighthood usually began each battle with a "heavy shock charge," using lances and horses to break up enemy formations. The infantry and archers would then take care of the rest.





# The Best Gets Better

More Units, More Missions, More Strategy Means More STARCRAFT Fun

by Robert Coffey

**H**ow do you top 1998's Strategy Game of the Year, a game that ranks as the definitive real-time strat title? Well, how about by releasing an add-on disc that sets the standard for mission packs. Once again, Blizzard shows the rest of the computer gaming industry how it should be done.

## Old Friends, New Enemies

BROOD WAR introduces a handful of new units to the game, about two per race, most of which are responses to perceived weaknesses in each race in the original game. While some gamers may have been hoping for more units, passing up the kitchen-sink approach preserves the game's artful play

balancing while still adding lots of strategic options.

The Protoss can now create the devastating Dark Templars that were available only as special units in STARCRAFT. Dark Templars can merge to create Dark Archons, who wield impressive psychic powers. Finally, the Protoss have an answer to pesky Terran and Zerg air units in the form of the Corsair, an air-to-air fighter that also employs a disruption web to temporarily incapacitate ground forces.

Terrans can now rip through hordes of Mutalisks and Guardians with the Valkyrie frigate, whose missile volleys are all the more vicious thanks to a large area of splash damage. The Marines, the backbone of the Terran forces, become more effective thanks to the Medic, who autoacquires injured soldiers for healing, can get locked-down vehicles operational again, and can blind organic units with an optic flare. Also, Goliaths get a new upgrade to improve their effectiveness against air units.

Lastly, the Zergs get the Devourer, an acid-spewing assault flyer that quickly weakens enemy airborne units, two new upgrades to make Ultralisks faster and tougher to kill, and the Lurker. The Lurker is great, a new Hydralisk



**RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES** Swarms of Mutalisks aren't quite the threat they used to be to Terran forces. Here a squad of Valkyrie missile frigates pounds some Mutas.

aspect that is useless above ground but wicked when it burrows, attacking in a broad range like a very tough, portable sunken colony.

## Fighting the Good Fight

Blizzard introduces all these units in a new series of 26 missions, again spread across the three races. Using some new tile sets, the new missions are undeniably tough, with early missions easily equaling the difficulty level of midgame missions in the original.

If anything, the mix of missions in BROOD WAR is superior to that of STARCRAFT. This can be attributed to scripted sequences and conditions that give many of the missions interesting twists. For

instance, one Terran mission has you getting nuked back to the Stone Age right as it starts, forcing you to regroup and work diligently to avoid more nuclear assaults. Even the non-base building, "dungeon crawl"

missions have been shaken up—one Protoss mission forces you to pick your way through thick Terran defenses to destroy some generators with a very limited number of troops.

Wrapping all this up is an epic story, full of treachery, deceit, and villainy, which easily surpasses that of the first game. Told in scripted sequences and the best cut-scenes in gaming, the story grabs you. Play balance has been tweaked a bit more in a number of ways. For example, Zerg larva are generated more slowly to prevent rushes. It is a little surprising that the add-on pack still won't allow you to ally with computer-controlled forces in skirmish mode.

But that niggle isn't enough to cast much of a shadow on BROOD WAR. By giving gamers more than they could have expected, BROOD WAR is head and shoulders above other add-on discs and simply a must-have for any STARCRAFT fan. **CGW**

*When Robert Coffey isn't punishing Thierry Nguyen with thousands of Mutalisks, he likes to unwind with a few of his zombie scientist brothers in a round of team HALF-LIFE.*

COMPUTER  
**GAMING**  
WORLD



**APPEAL:** Anyone who considers themselves a true RTS gamer.

**PROS:** Great new units add more strategic depth; challenging mission design; beautifully balanced gameplay; even better story than STARCRAFT.

**CONS:** Missions get hard quickly; still can't ally with AI units in skirmish mode.

**DIFFICULTY:** Advanced.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 90, Windows 95/98 or NT4.0, 16MB RAM, 80MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, SVGA video card, sound card, original version of STARCRAFT

**3D SUPPORT:** None.

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** Modem, (2 players); LAN, Internet via battle.net (2-8 players); one CD per game.

Price: \$29.95

Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment  
Irvine, CA  
(800) 953-SHOW

www.blizzard.com



**BARBARIC BONUS** These infected command centers are your reward for completing a secondary objective in the preceding mission.

# Retribution, Profit, and Loss

More Missions, More Spreadsheets, More Hexagons

## Retribution



Publisher: WizardWorks  
Price: \$19.95  
www.wizworks.com

Since STARCRAFT gave gamers the tools to make their own campaigns and maps, one wonders what appeal a mission

multiple goals, with whichever one you achieve determining your next mission. There weren't too many new heroes, and the voice-acting, while not as good as the original game's, was tolerable.

Multiplayer maps are subdivided into short games, co-op games, and general free-for-alls. They're a decent and aren't buggy. Still, these are only new maps, and

business sims are festooned with weird sounds, shapes, words, and characters, all poured over familiar concepts: GAZILLIONARE focused on trading, CAPITALISM recreated retail sales, and now PROFITANIA adopts the manufacturer's point of view. But they have all trafficked in weirdness, as if widgets met chaos theory on acid and exploded in a shower of baby talk: Dithol Grog, Balpus Nobs, and Woblic Rubber.

This whimsy is one reason PROFITANIA's lack of printed docs is so annoying. The mechanics are fairly simple, but the game needs some sort of printed reference for all these weird products and raw materials, so you can actually figure out the difference between an Atok Wire and a Bignal Cord.

LavaMind throws characters and subplots into the mix, but they make for an odd juxtaposition of calculation and chance. You spend most of your time carefully figuring profit margins and maintenance costs, but it's anyone's guess whether a visit to the Nupre Mati Temple or Buttercup Ladies will lead to extra money or lost reputation. I can think of no fitter caveat for PROFITANIA's haphazard gameplay than Robert Burns' aphorism: "The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a-gley." There's

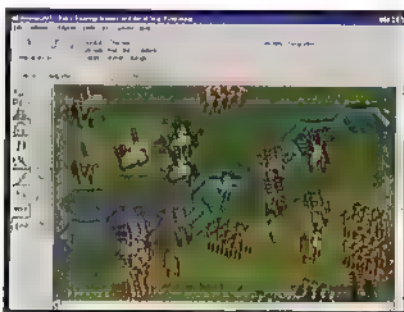
a similarly odd juxtaposition of the real-time commodities exchange, which is like playing whack-a-mole with numbers. To paraphrase Freud, sometimes a spreadsheet is just a spreadsheet. —Tom Chick

## Dragoon Battlepack 3: Zorndorf



Publisher: Art of War  
Price: \$29.95

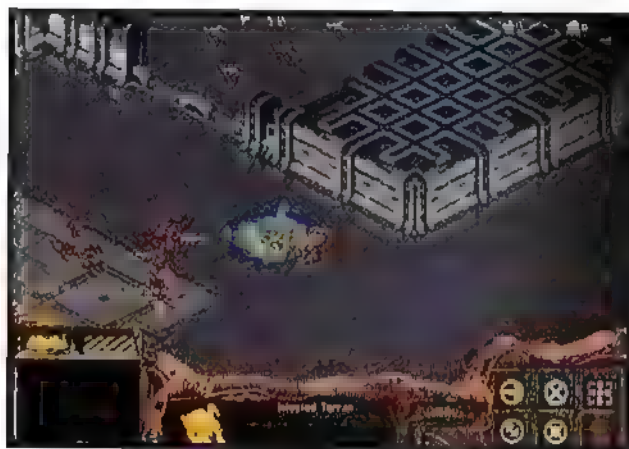
www.boku.simplenet.com/index.html



The third entry in Friedrich the Great's battles features the Prussian master in two of his bad years, 1758 and 1759. To say that Friedrich came away with a draw would be kind, as these campaigns marked the beginning of the dark days of the Seven Years' War. The three battles of Paltzig, Kunersdorf, and Zorndorf show not only why Friedrich had a rough time, but also how he was able to still maintain a viable army.

The game still emphasizes command morale and unit cohesion. Russian numbers and fire doctrine set it apart from the Austrian battles of earlier DRAGOON battlepacks, and even veteran Prussian grenadiers look bad going against massed cannon and steady musketry.

A simple yet accurate interface helps play, although the hex-by-hex movement becomes tedious when troops are not in enemy range. The AI is solid on defense, giving the Prussian player all he can handle. An odd bug for General Demicoud at Zorndorf for WIN98 is the only major flaw. I look forward to BATTLEPACK 4: LEUTHEN. —Jim Cobb



pack would have. With homemade maps of variable quality available to gamers free on the Internet, the big draw for a commercial release would have to be its assumed quality testing. Thankfully, Stardock Systems did a nice job designing the new maps and scenarios in RETRIBUTION.

The campaign story deals with the three races vying for control of an ancient X'El Nagan artifact. Here, the designers have linked the scenarios together, so you automatically progress through them instead of having to manually load each one. The scenarios themselves vary in quality but some genuine surprises were thrown in for good measure. Take, for instance, the scenario in which the two other races periodically fight each other, leaving you to pick off the survivors; or the one in which you use civilians to activate defensive mechanisms. Also, at times, the missions offer

there are no new units or cut-scenes. It's no BROOD WAR, but it's not a total waste of money either. —Thierry Nguyen

## Profitania Deluxe



Publisher: LavaMind  
Price: \$44.99  
www.lavamind.com

No one can accuse LavaMind of creating derivative games. Their

Item	Price	Quantity	Value	Weight	Volume
Atok Wire	100	100	10000	100	100
Bignal Cord	200	50	10000	200	200
Buttercup Ladies	300	33	10000	300	300
Nupre Mati Temple	400	25	10000	400	400
Profitania Deluxe	500	20	10000	500	500
Woblic Rubber	600	17	10000	600	600



# Mob Mentality

Manage a Criminal Empire in *GANGSTERS*

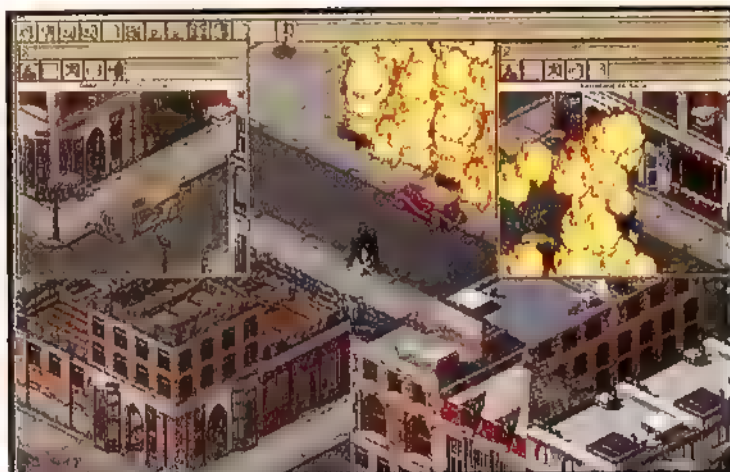
by Charles Ardaí

Organized crime has a powerful hold on the popular imagination. Decades before *The Godfather* made them classy, gangster films were already packing audiences into movie houses. So why hasn't there been a successful computer game about gangsters? The same industry that has enshrined the Civil War and the Roman Empire in a dozen games apiece has been all but silent about the days of Al Capone and Lucky Luciano.

Now, along comes Eidos' *GANGSTERS* to set things right and, boy, is its heart ever in the right place. The designers must have wanted to make up for lost time, because they packed about five games' worth of material into this title. No

simple gunfights-and-speakeasies stuff here—you've got to manage every detail of an organized-crime empire, from the activities of the lowliest thug squeezing the neighborhood grocer for money up to the delicate top-level relationships between competing crime families. It's a game about recruiting hoods and retaining them when they whine for a bigger cut; it's about deciding how much staff time to allocate to extortion and how much to intimidation; it's about carrying out blood rivalries in a ruthless, calculating way; and it's about making money, any way you can. In short, *GANGSTERS* is an organized-crime simulation that treats a criminal empire as a variant on a business empire, asking you to watch every detail as if you were the CEO.

This can be both good and bad. Good, because *GANGSTERS* is a much richer game than it might have been, as a result of



**BIG BOMB THEORY** With one explosion already ripping the city, a mob car waits outside FBI headquarters before bombing it as well. If nothing else, *GANGSTERS* lets you live out your most antisocial tendencies.

its complexity and depth: It's a full-fledged simulation in the *SIMCITY* vein. Enough features change from game to game (the entire city of "New Temperance" is generated randomly each time you play) and there are enough subtle interactions among the countless pieces that you can revisit the game again and again. Bad, because *GANGSTERS* is so complex, and asks you to keep track of so many moving pieces, that many gamers will find it completely unplayable.

## The Gang's All Here

You start each game with a small gang operating out of a single building; your goal is to build your organization until it controls more territory than any other gang. The way you accomplish this is, first and foremost, by recruiting more hoods. (You can find good candidates hanging out in gyms and pool halls or at the docks.) You issue orders to thugs through your lieutenants, who decide which individual hood to send on each assignment. If you select your lieutenants with an eye to a high Intelligence rating, you can expect them to send the hood with the five-star Explosives rating to bomb a squealer's store and the hood with the five-star Business rating to run your casino, rather than the other way around.

The game features two phases that alternate as the action proceeds. First, you issue a week's worth of orders in the Gang Organizer interface, then you set events in motion and watch the results in a real-time environment called the Working Week. The Gang Organizer is where you assign hoods to lieutenants' teams, decide

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** People who came out of *The Godfather* wanting to be a consigliere.

**PROS:** Enormously detailed simulation, with thousands of characters and enough randomness to be unpredictable.

**CONS:** Interface is overly hard to use and even harder to learn—most gamers will give up in frustration.

**DIFFICULTY:** Advanced.

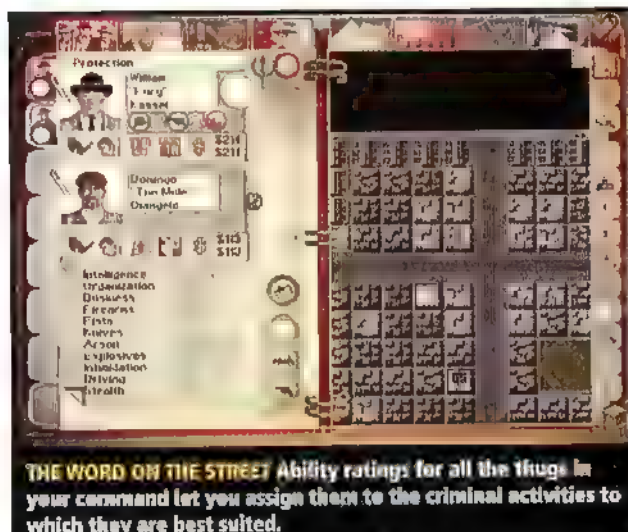
**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 166, Windows 95/98, 32MB RAM, 150MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 2MB SVGA video card, sound card.

**3D SUPPORT:** None

**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** LAN, Internet via Mplayer (2-4 players); one CD per player.

Price: \$49.99  
Publisher: Eidos Interactive  
San Francisco, CA  
(415) 547-1200

www.eidosinteractive.com



**THE WORD ON THE STREET** Ability ratings for all the thugs in your command let you assign them to the criminal activities to which they are best suited.

which lieutenants will handle what missions, determine which gang members to promote and which to fire (or kill), and outfit your gang with weapons and vehicles. It's also where you get to read endless reports, ranging from your accountant's profit-and-loss statement to a rolodex full of notes on the results of each gang member's activities.

The Working Week is where the game switches more to an action mode, as you follow your gang members around the streets, watching them extort, bomb, kill, die, and skulk

around. You have some control over your gang's activities—for instance, you can interrupt a hood's preprogrammed extortion rounds to have him assault or kill an enemy gang member—but for the most part success here is determined by planning and order selection in the Gang Organizer. Once a Working Week ends, you're sent back to the Gang Organizer to plan the next week.

### A Matter of Control

The two-phase structure is not a bad idea, but the real-time section is sufficiently less important than the planning and analysis

section, especially early in the game, that the balance feels off. You spend a lot of time scrolling along impeccably rendered city streets, watching as men stroll among literally thousands of other pedestrians, but it's not time well

hours just to find every part of it, never mind learn it well enough to play. There are screens within screens, buttons within tabs, and so many unlabeled icons that anyone but a truly dedicated gamer with lots of free time will probably throw up his hands in despair. I can appreciate a complex simulation as much as anyone, but you have to draw the line somewhere: Learning to play a game shouldn't require as much study and practice as learning to play the flute.

Then there are some design errors that suggest GANGSTERS just wasn't playtested adequately. When recruiting gener-

ates 10 interested candidates, can

you hire all 10 with a single button click? No, you have to hire each one separately. When a week ends, can you get a report of all the orders that failed? No, you have to look at each order's results separately. Worse still is the game's real-time message system: It bombards you with a constant stream of (mostly useless) messages during the Working Week; unfortunately, I could find no way to sort the important messages from the unimportant automatically, so you have to deal with them all one by one. It's the death-by-a-thousand-cuts school of game

design, draining the fun out of playing the game by forcing the player to perform countless boring tasks.

This is not to say that the game isn't any fun at all. I have never played a game that seemed more convincingly alive than this one, and it's fun just to watch the city as the people of New Temperance go about their simulated lives. The strategist in me also enjoyed the subtle ways in which decisions you make have unanticipated consequences. But the fun is certainly diminished by the game's interface, which stands as a barrier first to learning the game and then to playing it. (There is a tutorial, but it mainly intimidates new players by drowning them in information they have no chance of retaining.)

Was there really no way to make the game so detailed without making the controls unmanageably complex? If so, the smart move would have been to sacrifice some of the detail. As it is, I think only the hardest of hardcore gamers (and reviewers, who have no choice) will stick with this game to the bloody end. Those who do will find it rewarding, but still painful to play—and, frankly, not rewarding enough to make up for the pain. **CGW**

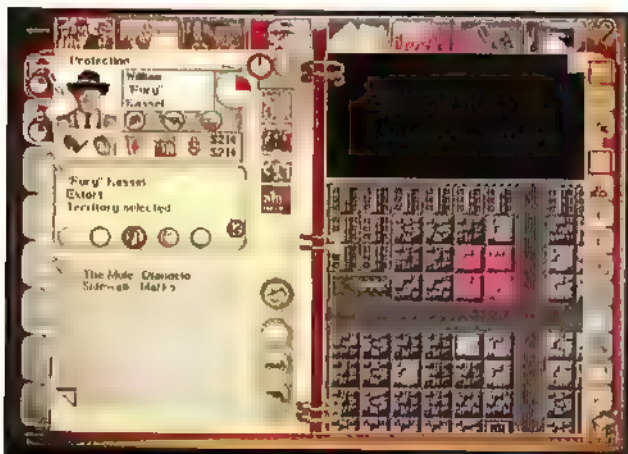
*Charles Arda edited Kingpins: Tales From Inside the Mob, published by Carroll & Graf.*



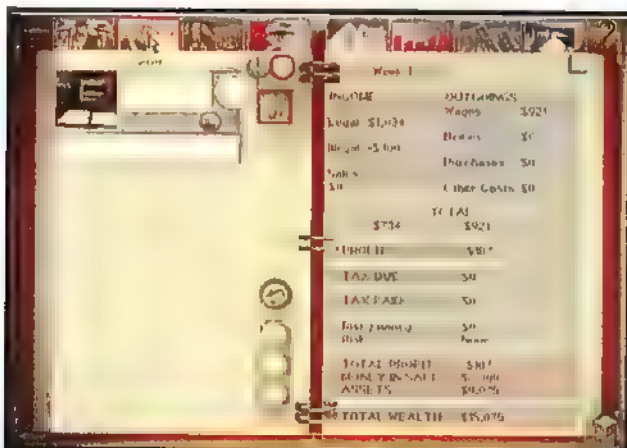
**MEAN STREETS** Your hoods blend in with the teeming street life in New Temperance. Whatever its faults, GANGSTERS does feature detailed city environments that are impressive.

spent from a gaming point of view. In the street-level view, where the graphics are prettiest, you can't watch enough territory to be effective; in the rooftop or city-plan views you can cover more ground, but your men are just colored dots and you can't tell which is which. The temptation to accelerate the Working Week and get it over with quickly is enormous, but this impinges your ability to respond to unplanned events.

Problems with the Gang Organizer are even more serious. The interface is so complicated and so multilayered that it takes



**TOO MANY BUTTONMEN** Scads of buttons, tons of tabs, too many icons, and a very unhelpful tutorial make GANGSTERS' interface unbelievably cumbersome.



**COOKIN' THE BOOKS** Your accountant keeps you updated on your gang's financial program. Treat him well—remember what happened to Al Capone.



# Settling for Less

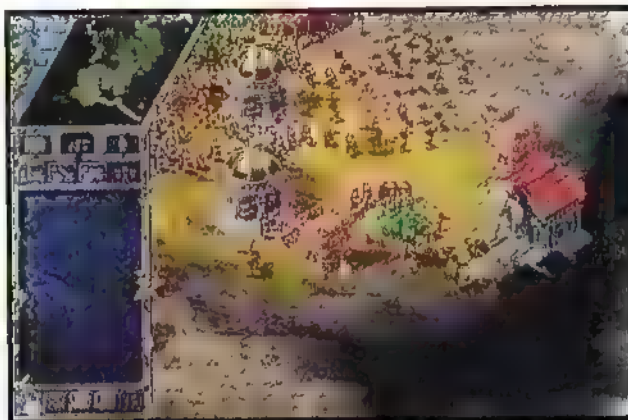
*It May Take a Village, Just Not the Ones You Build in SETTLERS III*

by Samuel Brown Baker II

**S**ETTLERS III is a SIMCITY-ish look at medieval times...with an added overlay of magic courtesy of patron deities. Gameplay revolves around creating the infrastructure for society.

You put up the right buildings in the right relation to each other, and the cute Weeble-like guys do the rest.

You can be Roman, Asian, or Egyptian, with appropriate building architecture. Each race has its quirks, but the major difference is how much stone and wood they use to construct buildings, since wood is renewable and stone is not. Asians use the most wood and the least stone, Egyptians are the reverse, and Romans strike a happy medium.



**THE SWEET PROOF OF VICTORY** Enemy buildings vanish as their territory falls to your invading hordes.

## Pig Iron

There are different buildings for everything, and only a half-dozen or so are specific to each race. Economic interrelationships are complex. For example, say you want to mine iron ore: Simple, you build a mine. But for optimum performance of your miners you need a slaughterhouse that turns pigs into ham. Then you need a pig farm. Pigs need grain, so you build a farm. They also need water, hence a waterworks. And the butcher, farmer, and miner all need the appropriate tools. You build a tool smithy. The toolsmith needs...and so on. Most of the time you're deciding what buildings you want, where to put new buildings, and why your (fill in the blank) aren't producing.

Buildings require territory, and territory requires guard towers and castles to hold against a foe. Because you spend so much time building, combat feels more like an interloper than a boon companion. You select soldiers and the odd siege weapon and march off to war, fighting over the enemy fortifications. Your troops knock on the door, and the enemy conveniently present themselves one at a time while enemy archers shoot at you

from the battlements. If you win, you take both the tower and territory while other enemy buildings—in an apparent fit of embarrassment—vanish in a cloud of smoke, leaving half their construction cost in supplies behind. Though they require occasional retargeting, the troops fight well enough by themselves.

## Who Needs That Fancy Book Learnin'?

The printed "manual" is a CD-pamphlet strategy guide apparently for children, while the real manual is an HTML document put on your hard drive. It does a fair job of explaining the basics of play, though the end words of many lines run into the dark border and are illegible.

Taken as a whole, the printed manual, HTML manual, and tutorial still don't do enough to explain the game. I felt as if I had been told how to drive a car and then

been dropped into the middle of afternoon rush-hour traffic on the Beltway. There is no gradual introduction of game elements.

Then there are the bugs. The copy protection scheme has problems that appear related to the speed of your CD-ROM drive. New systems with fast CD-ROM drives make the program think it's been copied, so their trees don't reach full maturity, ironworks produce piglets (as in oink) instead of pig iron, and so on. A patch has been issued, but as of this writing some users were still having troubles.

There are other problems. You have to leave the scenario you're playing in order to load a game or quit. The game calls you a loser



**TEMPLE OF TOON** Asian priests gather outside a temple. This shot really shows off the game's pretty, stylized graphics.

when you do, even in the tutorial. Save games are huge (13+ MB) and take a long time to save or load on a Pentium Pro Overdrive 333MHz machine. The game crawls on large maps.

There is something compelling about SETTLERS III. Many times I played longer than intended, wanting to tweak just one more thing. But in the end, the feeling of playing a loser remains. **GCW**

*Samuel Baker has been writing about computer games since there's been an IBM PC.*

## COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



**APPEAL:** Dedicated fans of the first two SETTLERS games.

**PROS:** Excellent individual AI; like watching a Lego village come to life.

**CONS:** Poor documentation; no loading saves from within a scenario; huge save files; severe copy protection difficulties for some users.

**DIFFICULTY:** Advanced.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Pentium 100, Windows 95/98, 32MB RAM, 250MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 2MB DirectX compatible video card, sound card, 28.8 modem for Internet gaming.

**3D SUPPORT:** None.

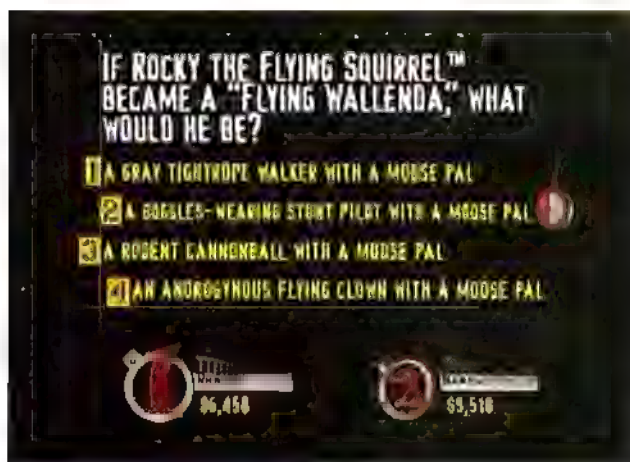
**MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:** LAN and Internet (2-10 players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$39.99  
Publisher: Blue Byte  
Austin, TX  
(800) 933-BYTE

www.settlers3.com

# Two Jacks in the After Dark

Three Classics/Puzzles From Berkeley Systems



## You Don't Know Jack 4: The Ride



Publisher: Sierra Attractions/  
Berkeley Systems  
Price: \$29.95  
www.sierra.com

If you feel like you *do* know Jack, you'll be happy to know that YOU DON'T KNOW JACK 4: THE RIDE juices up the irreverent quiz game with modified rules, new games, and new sounds and animations, making for a fresh experience that doesn't lose the tasty flavor of the original.

The premise is unchanged—up to three players participate in a game show, buzzing in and answering a series of irreverent questions while trying not to get overly annoyed at the “witty” banter of the host. JACK now starts with a moral question, which is used to select a overlying theme for that particular game, such as politics or censorship. Players now buzz in to choose the value of each question—one right answer may garner \$12,539, while the next might win a mere \$153.

As a bonus, the installation CD includes a feature called “You Don't Hear Jack: You Don't Know Jack without all the annoying

questions,” 20 minutes of humorous fake ads from earlier JACK volumes.

JACK's play couldn't be simpler—buzz in and choose an answer—making it a great party game that anyone can join in. Just make sure to find at least one friend—this Ride is fun with friends, but is pretty pointless solo. —Dawn Jepsen

## After Dark



Publisher: Berkeley/Sierra On-Line  
Price: \$29.95  
www.sierra.com

They're back: the twisted, silly characters from the AFTER DARK screen savers. Mowing Maniac, Bad Dog, the Hula Girls, and others are no longer content merely to protect our screens. Now they star in their own games.



There are 11 games offered here, plus a screen saver. Some of the 11, such as *Mahjong*, are simply traditional games dressed up in the bizarre AFTER DARK motif. Only *Solitaire* appears without some sort of mutilation. Other of the program's exercises are less traditional.

*Roof Rats* is a challenge to eliminate colored rooms in order to rescue twisted tenants, while *Toaster Run* lets you navigate a flying toaster through 3D mazes. These, plus *Foggy Boxes*, a tic-tac-toe relative, were the stand-out games for me, each proving addictive in its own way.

Most of the remainder will appeal to arcade fanatics. Several of the games will actually appeal to children as well as to more mature players.

Unfortunately, the screen saver is rather a disappointment and is merely a repetitive collection of short demonstrations of the different games. Given Berkeley Systems' history of screen savers, I expected better.

The graphics and sounds are amusing and well executed. However, the graphics are rather small. For some reason, the games only run at 640x480 in 256 colors. At higher screen resolutions, they are forced to live in windows.

AFTER DARK GAMES is an interesting collection that will appeal to a wide audience. If nothing else, it makes for a good time-killer.

—Samuel Baker II

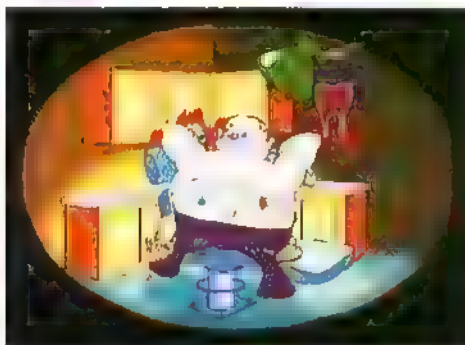
## HeadRush



Publisher: Berkeley/Sierra On-Line  
Price: \$29.95

www.sierra.com

HEADRUSH is a clone of YOU DON'T KNOW JACK with some, though not all, of the sexy stuff taken out and youth-



oriented music and graphics thrown in. Instead of being able to force another player to answer a tough question by choosing the *Screw Your Neighbor* option, for instance, you choose *Bite Your Neighbor* instead. On the other hand, you still have the occasional testicle joke.

The soundtrack is jangly and loud, and each round is introduced by a gross little cartoon instead of by a witty musical pun. Furthermore, the questions refer to *Party of Five* and *Beanie Babies* instead of their 1970s counterparts. The trivia has a high school flavor to it: Water is made of hydrogen and oxygen and the Boston Tea Party involved throwing tea in a harbor.

There is nothing wrong with knowing these things, of course, and the questions are still asked in funny terms. The host of HEADRUSH batters the players with fewer put-downs than JACK's, but on the whole I enjoyed the game far less. HEADRUSH is a reasonable JACK knock-off, but it doesn't have the JACK magic. —Charles Arday



# Half-Life

## How to Maximize Every Advantage—the Surgical Approach

by Greg Fortune

I tend to work my way through the various defenses of HALF-LIFE by meticulously picking apart the structure of the enemy defense. This allows me to penetrate each level with a minimum of risk. If you're in the mood for John Wayne "cavalry charge" kind of tactics, you'll want to look elsewhere. On the other hand, if you want to maximize every advantage and surgically take out your enemies, then you've come to the right place.

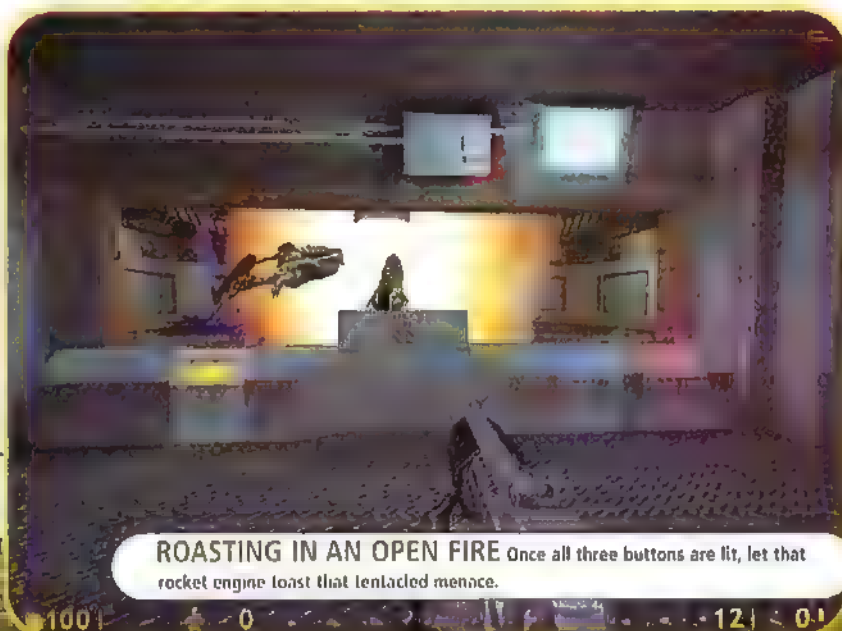
**Spoilers! If you don't want to know.....don't look!**

### Blast Pit

Here's a puzzle to keep you busy. The first indication you get that this isn't going to be your standard firefight is when the scientist gets dragged out of the control room by one of the tentacles. Don't bother trying to shoot them, they're rather safe from your puny arsenal. Exit the control room, make your way past the barnacle and up the stairs. Waiting on the platform, a Barney says, "Be quiet, this thing hears us!" That's your first major clue. Remember what you learned in the training course: There is a way that you can move quickly. Also, take notice of the stash of a certain type of weapon in the next room—more, in fact, than you're able to carry at one time. Fill up. Now, move out onto the platform.

There are a couple ways out of the silo, all of them blocked. You should have the method of fixing that already in your hand. I suggest opening the way before trying to sneak through. There's one handy thing to keep in mind: If you crouch while you use a ladder, you will remain stealthy and have a much better chance of making it out alive. Use your grenades to distract the tentacles as you quietly work your way down the ladders and across the platforms. Make your way through the now open doorway on the bottom level, jump across the broken walkways, and cycle the door you find in the corridor.

Head down the corridor ahead until you get to the platform. I wonder what that button does? If you have any trouble with the elevator, get to a ladder before you express to the ground floor. Once at the bottom, head down the hall to the small platform. Turning on the generator takes a bit of work, but you can do it if you make your way up both ladders leading to the generator and avoid getting run over by the speeding platform. Make your way



**ROASTING IN AN OPEN FIRE** Once all three buttons are lit, let that rocket engine toast that tentacle menace.

back to the ladder and head back up to the loading dock. Those boxes in the loading area aren't just for show, at least not if you want to avoid getting shocked by the now-electrified puddle down the corridor ahead. Head back to the silo.

Follow the red and blue pipes until you get to the fuel room. You didn't actually think it would be that easy, did you? Turn around and look for a ladder leading into a dark area. Now listen carefully for a moment. Once you're ready, head down the ladder, break the grate covering the hole, and head down the second ladder.

At the pipe junction, hang a left and climb up the ladder. There's a zombie at the top. You can fix that. Break out and grab some more grenades in the room around the corner. Down the hall and past the door is the biggest fan you've ever seen. Hmmm, there must be a way to turn on that fan...

Now that you've found the switch, be careful. Once you turn it on, it won't take long for those blades to reach full speed, and then you'll have no chance to make it back up that ladder.

So now what? You still haven't gained entry to the fuel room! I'll also guarantee that the door isn't open just because you've turned on a fan. Boy, that's one big fan though...

Still stuck? Try throwing a grenade at the fan. Where'd it go?

Once you've reached the air vent, work your way to the fuel room. Now turn on the oxygen and fuel. Head up the ladder, out the door, and follow the pipes back to the silo.

Stock up on grenades, work your way back up to the control room, and fire the rocket. Then get away from the broken window. It gets kind of hot in there, as the tentacle will surely confirm. Now go ahead and make as much noise as you want.

**See the Review**

FEBRUARY ISSUE • 5 STARS

## Gargantuan Power-up

**A**s you begin Power Up, you'll immediately stumble on a couple of grunts getting toasted by a gargantua. This should be your first clue that firing your rifle at this beastly isn't going to do the trick. This guy is a lot tougher than that. While he's busy with the grunts, run into the smaller tunnel that's directly across from you. Now head down toward the power generator. Beware of serious grunt activity ahead. Before you head down the elevator that lies behind the grunt position hideout above the generator room, try setting some laser trip mines in strategic places, in case any grunts come back while you're down there. When you have reached the generator room, you'll notice that unit one is offline. Why don't you go back to the stairs and look for the Maintenance Area? Once you've found the pump, you should see what's blocking your progress. Now go back upstairs and turn on that generator. Head all the way back to the Track Control Room where the platform broke earlier. Once you're in the control room, lure the gargantua to the window by letting it catch sight of you. Now run down to the tunnel that leads back to the room the gargantua is in, run out into the room, and high

**BUG ZAPPER DELUXE** You need to think electrical to take out this Gargantuan.



tail it down the tunnel immediately on your left. Don't bother looking behind you, because the gargantua is right on your tail. Run past the coils and look for a switch that has a shocking surprise for your big ugly friend.

## Nest on a Rail

**Y**ou will get to a point where you reach a gate blocking the rail that has a large semicircular area off to the left. You'll see a machine-gun emplacement, several stacks of boxes, and a bunker on the right side of this area. This won't be too tricky if you've got a couple of grenades, particularly the AR5 grenades you should have picked up where the last rail ended. Don't bother going for the machine-gun emplacement because the bunker that overlooks it will take you out. I like to get off the train before it reaches the gate and take up a position at the entrance to this area opposite the vacant machine gun. From here, with a couple of grenades, you can decimate the grunts hiding behind the crates on the platform. There's one grunt behind each set of wooden crates, and another hiding behind some green crates next to the bunker. First, lob grenades behind the wooden crates. Preferably use AR grenades because they'll explode on contact, eliminating the possibility of escape, and if you do end up flushing them out you've already got your AR5 ready. Once you've taken care of the grunts, hop across the tracks to a position opposite the red ladder that's leading up to the platform. The bunker will fire at you, but keep moving and hide once under cover until the bunker

**BUNKER HILL** Defended areas like this hallway force you to fine-tune your assault skills.



stops firing. Jump across the track, climb the ladder, and quickly duck behind the green box closest to the top of the ladder. Again, wait for the shooting to stop. Now quickly move to the green boxes up ahead of you to the left. Once you've made it there, you can stroll over to the side of the bunker (where the switch is) and shoot the grunt in the bunker through the crack in the side. Now go grab some health at the med station on the other side.



## Gonarch's Lair

**U**pon entering Gonarch's Lair, the first thing you'll want to do is get to cover around the rock to the right of where Gonarch is approaching. Gonarch has a nasty kick attack, so the best place to be is somewhere Gonarch can't get. Beware being too much in view of this guy, because he'll launch a toxic chemical attack at you through the air. Nail Gonarch with heavy weapons (category 4 or 5) until he runs away. I prefer to use my store of hand grenades first, as they will be much less useful later on. Try to save your rockets and AR grenades for later. Once he's gone, check behind the rock by the two pointed towers to find a healing pool. Now follow Gonarch down his hole to the second area. Make sure to grab the battery and the ammo case

**SPIDER AND THE FLY** Chase Gonarch down into its lair before cornering and killing it once and for all



lying in the tunnel before you hit section two.

As you enter the second area, you'll notice a mesh area in the center of the open space. Therein lies

your best chance for survival. Below are a healing pool and another unfortunate colleague who has been good enough to leave you some ammo. Use your long jump to leap between the two areas and watch out for headcrabs. Gonarch should give you ample opportunity to fire on him from below with your rockets. If Gonarch runs where you can't see him, use the jump pad in one of the tunnels to pop up and let Gonarch see you. He'll move so you can hit him again. Whatever you do, don't let the pad bounce you out of the cave! If you fall and take damage while inside the cave with the pad, just jump over to the pool and heal yourself. Use the hornet gun to dispatch any little hoppers that end up below with you, and keep working on him. Once you've damaged Gonarch enough, he'll again run away to a deeper part of his lair. Now you can use the pad to jump out of your hiding place and pursue Gonarch further.

Jump down to the ledge with the glowing crystals, face the wall, and back down into the hole behind you. This lets you start the third stage facing Gonarch. He'll jump down into a pit, and you will be compelled to follow. Fall through the mesh and collect the batteries and ammunition below. Take cover under a ledge and begin hitting Gonarch with everything you've got. When Gonarch takes a certain amount of damage, he'll fall through the mesh and drop down with you. When that happens, you're almost there. Don't worry about the crabs jumping on you, you can take them out when your first objective is complete. When Gonarch dies, he leaves a gaping hole with a teleporter at the bottom and a healing pool on one side. Now you have the time to clean up the rest of the little crabs. Then, jump down the hole to finally escape Gonarch's Lair.

## Crabby Enemies



**Headcrabs** Take to take these out with two shots from the Glock. Sure you can use the crowbar, but who wants to crawl around on the floor with the crabs?



**Barnacles** Easily killed, barnacles can be taken out with any of your small arms. In fact, if the barnacle isn't hanging from too great a height, I'll save some ammo, take a barnacle ride to the top, and give it a single kiss with my crowbar.



**Leeches** Leeches are only a minor nuisance. Use your crowbar on them and dispatch them with ease.



**Houndeyes** Grab your crowbar, rush in, and pummel one. When you hear the teatitle whine, run out of range of the blast. Then run in and take out another one. They're easy to kill, so save your ammo. If this seems a little much for you, a couple of rounds with the Glock or a close range shotgun blast will clear out any Houndeyes you meet.



**Alien Grunts** These hulking aliens like to use the Hornet Gun, which allows them to hit you from around corners. These guys are pretty resistant to bullets, so use energy or explosive weapons against them for best results.



**Alien Slaves** These unarmored foes will fall easily to the Glock, the shotgun, the MP5, or just about anything else you throw at them.



**Zombies** Zombies used to be your friends, but now they've changed their minds. Any small arms will work—as will the crowbar—provided that you step away from the Zombies' one two punch.



**Bullsquid** These aliens are pretty random shots, which should give you plenty of time to deal with them. Just make sure you don't get close enough for them to bite you.



**Ichthyosaur** The great white sharks of HALF-LIFE, these are best dealt with from the shore, or from the comfort of a protective cage. Underwater, use your crossbow for maximum effect.



**Flyers** My weapon of choice against the flyers is the Hornet Gun, due to the fact that it doesn't run out of ammo and the rounds track their target. Lead them a little and you'll get 'em every time. All other weapons work on them as well, although the crowbar isn't recommended.



**Human Grunts** They hunt in groups, tend to wait in strategic spots, use cover, and keep moving, so plan your attack. I prefer to use the MP5 and grenades, mainly because grunts drop that kind of ammunition when you take them out. When you get the crossbow, use it to snipe them from a distance. It's silent, and a crossbow hit anywhere on a grunt scores a kill.



**Human Assassins** Fast, agile, and accurate, they are deadly foes, found only in two areas, each filled with stacks of boxes. I crouch through the rooms using the crossbow and the scope, because I can take out one assassin without alerting the others. If you prefer blow a few MP5 clips and loss grenades. Don't chase an assassin; his friends will nail you as you pass.

## Tactical Tips

### Bunkers

The best way to take out a bunker is to get close enough to it that you no longer fall within its fire zone. Then, either lob a grenade or place a det pack through the crack where the bunker meets the wall. Sometimes, you can even shoot the grunt inside through the crack. And save your explosives.

### Grunts with Rocket Launchers (On a Rail)

The best way to get past grunts with big guns is to duck! These guns have no vertical movement, just horizontal, so approach low and you should be okay. Be sure to stay away from walls where a missile could hit behind or above you.

### How Do I Get Out of This Water?

If you are having trouble getting to that doorway on the other side of the water immediately after your train takes a plunge, get out your crowbar and do something besides killing leeches. Hey, some things look kind of new, like they haven't spent all this time under water...

## Big Bad Bosses

### Gargantua

These towering aliens have both a devastating short-range flame attack and a long-range energy attack. They also have a left hook you won't soon forget. Usually there is a specific way to kill each of the three Gargantua that appear in HALF-LIFE, but if you've got the ammo to burn and want to dispatch them without the formalities, 10 grenades will do the trick.

### Gonarch

This adversary had me rolling around on the floor laughing. And, no, we don't really want to know exactly who this is supposedly modeled after. We just know that somebody at Valve really needs help. In any case, Gonarch is a creature you will only encounter once, in Gonarch's Lair. You will need to drive Gonarch away twice before you will be able to kill it, and it's recommended you use explosives and energy

weapons. The trigger to driving Gonarch into the next area is damage, so don't waste your bullets on it. Aim for the sack hanging from its belly, and stay away from this bad boy's kick attack. You'll also be fighting off crabs and dodging toxic chemicals, so be sure to look for the relatively safe area in each section of Gonarch's Lair to launch your attack.

### Tentacle

The huge green stalks you see are just the tip of the problem, so don't waste your time trying to kill them. They may retreat briefly after taking damage, but they will be right back. The key to tentacles is sound: If the tentacles can't hear you, they don't know where you are. Use grenades to distract them while you sneak by in stealth mode. Where they need to be destroyed, there will be a special method at hand, as your standard weapons aren't up to the task.

## Nihilanth

**W**ell, excuse me if I found a way to nuke the big guy without a fight! If you want a walkthrough of what to do when you let yourself get zapped halfway across the freaking galaxy and put into all kinds of silly situations, you'll need to go somewhere else. Here's the lazy man's way to take Nihilanth out of the picture without a fight. First, save your rockets. You will not need them until his head is open. As soon as you drop to the floor, run behind one of the large protrusions in the middle of the floor and get close to it so you can't see Nihilanth's face. If you can't see him, he can't hit or teleport you. Now turn around and use your .357 magnum to blow up the yellow crystals on the wall. Three shots each

will do the trick. When you've run out of crystals from your vantage, run to the next and repeat the process until all three crystals are destroyed. Now, notice the glowing orbs on his head. Whenever he takes damage, one of these orbs heals him and disappears. Normally, the orb would be replaced by one of the crystals, but we've already taken care of that, haven't we? Now step back just enough so that you've got a piece of his head to shoot at, but not enough for him to see you. Use everything but the rockets on him. Fire once, let the orb do its trick, then hit him again. You'll begin to notice that there are fewer and fewer elements to his "halo." When the last one is used, his head will split open like one of those eggs from *Alien*. There's a fourth



**BIG BABY ON BOARD** Whether you follow the normal way or our patented lazy-boy way, one thing is for certain: You gotta take this big baby down.

crystal in the center of his head that must be destroyed. Now, we could rush out and try to use those jump pads or get to the ledges to get a fair shot at the last crystal, but why bother? We've still got our laser-guided rockets! Fire one off to the side (make sure it's in laser mode by pointing it at the rock in front of you and right-clicking until you see a red dot) and move the pointer onto his head. If you angle it correctly, you'll pop that crystal and send him into his death throes. Talk about an Achilles heel!

*When not thinking of new ways to use his crowbar in HALF-LIFE, Greg Fortune enjoys blowing up the world with a friend in MYTH II.*



# WWII Air Combat Primer

*Strategy and Tactics for WWII Rookie Pilots*

by Jeff Lackey

**T**hese are good times for the PC pilot with a yearning to fly the not-so-friendly skies of WWII Europe, due to sims like

MicroProse's *EUROPEAN AIR WAR*, *WWII FIGHTERS* from EA/Jane's, and Microsoft's *COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR*. However, if you're a novice to flight sims in general or perhaps a jet jock who hasn't recently flown a prop job, you may need a few pointers to help you get the most out of your new program. Here are some hints and tips to help transform you from a rookie target to a feared Ace.



**IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME** This is the usual result of attacking heavily armed bombers from the rear.

**"Move toward any dot in the sky that remotely resembles an airplane."**

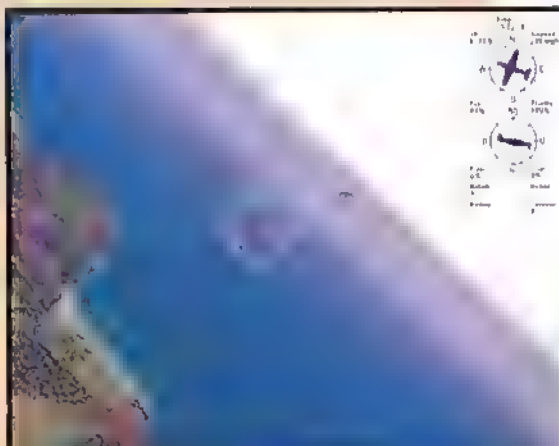
—Robert Scott Jr., USAAF ace with 10 victories

**"Never, ever attack unless you have the advantage."**

—Kurt Bühligen, Luftwaffe ace with 112 victories

The top aces in World War II thoroughly understood the relative strengths and weaknesses of each plane, so it's tempting to jump from one plane to another, hoping to get a feel for the differences. But a more effective approach is to select one aircraft, for example the Supermarine Spitfire, and fly it exclusively, playing through every mission or campaign in the game that allows you to stick with that plane. You'll develop an intimate knowledge of the plane, and you'll become far more effective and deadly in that aircraft than you would if you frequently switched mounts.

When you've done everything you can in the one plane, switch to a plane that you've frequently faced. For example, you might switch from the Spitfire to the Bf-109. You'll gain a real appreciation for the differences between the planes as well as an appreciation for the historical perspectives of each side. By the way, there's real-life precedent for sticking to one plane: Erich Hartmann flew the Bf-109g exclusively and apparently got to know it pretty well—he scored 352 kills.



**WHO'S US AND WHO'S THEM?** You can use optional labels to help distinguish the good guys from the bad guys.

**W**hile it's tempting to set every option to "totally realistic," you may want to start out using some player aids, especially if you're new to WWII flight sims. For example, it's very difficult at a distance to tell one fighter from another; no fancy cockpit radar here. Two options that can help are "labeling," which identifies every plane in the sky, and "object size," which makes planes appear larger than normal. That may feel like cheating, but it also compensates for the resolution limits of PC monitors. Likewise, you can toggle cockpit graphics off to gain a more unrestricted view.

Another cheat is to disable stalls and spins. Don't do this, though, if you want a feel for the differences in the planes, since stalls and spins were a significant factor in WWII air combat. Each sim has audio indicators that warn of an impending spin—turn the volume up loud enough to be able to hear them in time to react. If you do get into a spin, cut the throttle and apply neutral stick and opposite rudder. When the spin converts to a dive, level out gently and regain speed.



**DOWN ON THE DECK** Twisting dogfights that stick close to the ground typically favor the better turning fighters over "boom-and-zoom" aircraft.

**"Just keep pressing the (trigger) until you think you're going to collide..."**

—Pete Townsend, RAF No. 85 Squadron, 9 victories

No matter how skillful your flying, the bottom line is shooting down the enemy. These planes don't have long-range missiles that you can lock on, fire, and forget; They've got guns. When you're lining up your target, remember that you have to aim not where the enemy is, but where he's going to be when the bullets finally get there. The closer you are, the less lead you have to pull and thus the better your odds are of getting a kill.

Tommy McGuire, a USAAF ace with 38 victories, advised "Go in close, and then when you think you're too close, go in closer." Erich Hartmann stated, "Only when the windshield is filled up, then pull the trigger." If you're frustrated by an empty gun and an adversary who's flying away untouched, make it a point to get closer than you think is necessary before you pull the trigger.

**"I never cared much for the dogfight...90 percent of my attacks were surprise attacks."**

—Erich Hartmann, JG 52, 352 victories

**B**asic fighter maneuvers (BFM) are described in the various sims' manuals and are beyond the space allotted here (read Robert Shaw's *Fighter Combat* for everything you'll ever need to know about BFM), but as you study these, understand that your goal is not to fly fancier aerobatics than your adversary—it's to shoot him down.

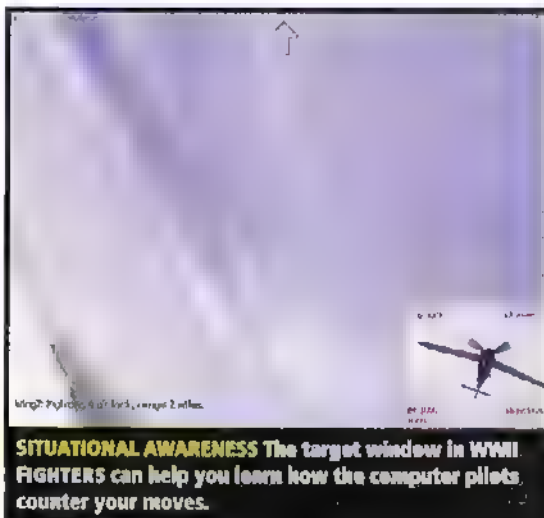
John Meyer, who achieved 23 victories in a P-51 and two MIG-15s during the Korean War, stated, "I didn't turn with enemy pilots as a rule... it was too risky." The main thing to keep in mind as you learn to Immelman, Chandelle, and Yo-yo is that the victor is the pilot who keeps his energy level higher than his opponent's and then uses that energy advantage to get the enemy in his sights. Energy from altitude and energy from speed are interchangeable, whereas high-speed turns tend to bleed energy that can be made up only by either diving or adding engine power. Remember that the latter option is not nearly as effective in these prop planes as it is in a modern jet fighter! Therefore, if you're in an airplane that can turn tighter and has a lower stall speed than your enemy, pulling him into a low-altitude turning battle gives you the advantage—your intent is to make him lose energy and stall, then shoot him as he waddles helplessly through the air.

On the other hand, if you're flying a plane that has a poor turn rate but is fast and can climb to the moon, you want to maintain an energy advantage by diving onto your prey, taking your shots, then regain your energy by climbing back to altitude. If you can lure a poor climbing plane into following you up into the clouds, watch him with your rear view; when he begins to fall away, swoop down and put him out of his low-energy misery. Adolph Galland's brother was killed this way, trying to follow an opponent in a climb, stalling, and then being shot down

as he fell back. Interestingly enough, he was flying a Bf-109, a craft that would be considered a "Boom and Zoom" fighter, and his enemy was flying a "turning" fighter, a Spitfire.

This illustrates a very important point: Effective energy management is more important than the comparative specifications of individual aircraft. In this case, the Spitfire had a large speed advantage at the time of his climb, Galland having bled his energy while trying to turn with the Spitfire. Many players complain that the computer pilots must be cheating when they get outmaneuvered by "inferior" planes. Nope: The computer pilots simply are masters of energy management. If you're a novice to BFM, and you find yourself unable to understand how your opponent is countering your moves, take advantage of the slow-motion option available in COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR and WWII FIGHTERS. This makes the action unfold at a much slower pace, giving you time to use your view keys to observe your adversary's maneuvers.

Novices should note that the fastest way to turn an airplane is *not* to push the throttle to the wall and yank hard on the stick. It's like trying to do a U-turn around a pylon in an automobile: If you try to do a 180 in your car by going 120 MPH and wrenching the wheel, you'll go very wide (turn radius) and it will take longer to get turned around (turn rate). At slower speeds you'll turn around in a shorter radius and more quickly. Of course, if you slow down to 2 MPH you may turn in the shortest radius of all, but it will take longer to turn around. The same holds for your fighter: Each plane has an optimal speed at which it will have the highest turn rate and smallest turn radius. Understanding the best cornering speed for the fighter you're flying and that of your opponent is critical to getting the upper hand.

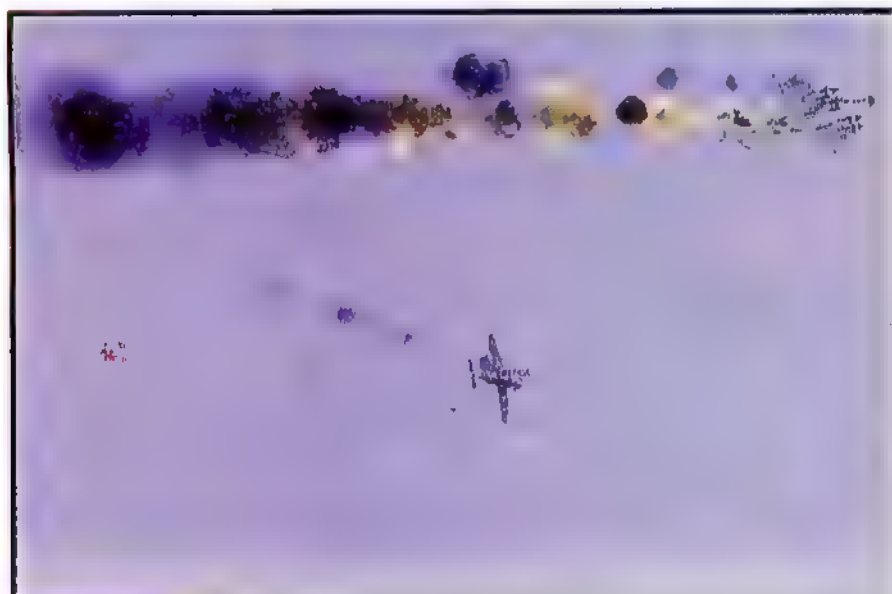


**SITUATIONAL AWARENESS** The target window in WWII FIGHTERS can help you learn how the computer pilots counter your moves.



"...the curve into 70 (B-17) Fortresses lets all the sins of one's life pass before one's eyes."

—Hans Phillip, JG 1, 206 victories



**TARGET FIXATION** This Pw-109 was so focused on attacking the bomber that he forgot to check his six, with predictable results.

famous cry of bomber crews as they sighted bandits at "12 o'clock high!"

What if the bombers are escorted by fighters? If your sim supports wingman commands, send some of your squadron off to keep the escort busy. If this isn't an option, your best bet is to simply watch your rear and press on attacking the bombers. Remember your goal isn't to shoot down fighters, but rather to prevent the bombers from delivering their load. Also, shooting the bombers down *after* they've dropped their bombs is much less desirable than preventing them from destroying their target. If you can do enough damage to cause them to abort their mission and turn for home, then your job is done.

If your role is to protect a flight of bombers, remember that your task is *not* shooting down enemy fighters! The most common mistake for a beginner on escort missions is to leave his charge to chase a

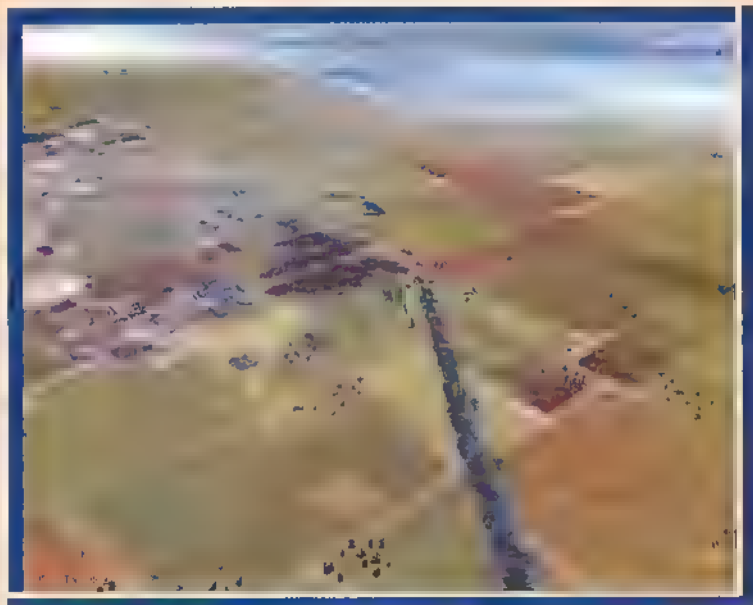
**Y**ou've been scrambled to intercept an incoming B-17 bomber raid. You find the bomber group, then slowly slide into a shooting position behind them. The next thing you know your plane is shredded by an angry fusillade of .50 caliber bullets pouring out of every Fortress in sight. As you parachute down you mumble, "There must be a better way..."

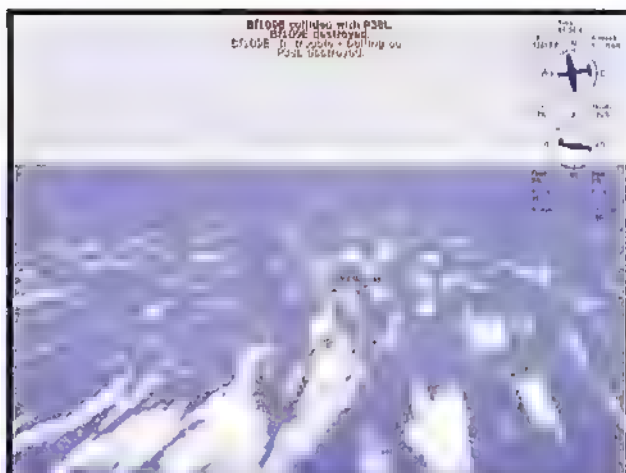
Don't feel stupid: The German fighters quickly learned the power of massed bombers. Latter variants of the B-17 carried 10 .50 caliber machine guns; multiply this by 10 or more bombers in formation, focusing all of their firepower on an interceptor, and you quickly realize the challenge of knocking these behemoths out of the sky. Adolph Galland's famous JG 26 developed a tactic worth trying: Fly parallel (but out of gun range) to the bomber group, to establish their course. Then fly ahead and turn into them for a slightly high, diving, head-on attack. The combined closing speeds results in a minimum time for the bombers to fire at you. Fill your sights with the front of the bomber, fire, then zoom safely below the formation. Extend out of range, climb, turn and repeat. You probably won't immediately destroy the bombers—rarely were bombers shot down on the initial pass. Instead, you'll create cripples that will fall behind the pack, where they can be picked off, safe from the deadly combined formation fire. This was a common tactic for the *Luftwaffe*, leading to the

fighter, only to find that the bomber formation is miles away, being picked apart by the remaining interceptors. Drive away the enemy fighters, but always stay close to the formation you are protecting.

## Alone Again, Naturally

This crippled bomber has fallen away from the pack, making him easy pickings.





**TOP OF THE WORLD** An effective strategy for so-called boom-and-oom fighters, such as the BF 109, is to circle above the fray, diving down on select targets.



**TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS** When escorting a bomber group, you must stay near the formation, resisting the temptation to chase enemy fighters.

## Reliving History

While the game manuals provide some information on basic fighter maneuvering, plane specifications, and historical background, there are a huge number of books of interest to the WWII sim pilot. Not only will they provide ideas on tactics, but reading firsthand accounts of the pilots who flew and fought in World War II will also give you a better historical perspective and a richer flying experience. The quotes used in this article all came from the following sources, which are highly recommended:

### Fighter Combat: Tactics and Maneuvering

Robert Shaw

**Naval Institute Press, 1985**

Don't be fooled by the jets on the cover; This is *the* bible of fighter tactics, with teachings applicable whether you're flying a Sopwith Camel, a P-51, or an F-16.

**Allied Fighter Aces of World War II**

**Mike Spick**

**Stackpole Books, 1997**

### Luftwaffe Fighter Aces

**Mike Spick**

**Stackpole Books, 1996**

If you fly WWII air-combat sims, these are must reads. Excellent descriptions of the tactics, planes, and pilots of the war.

### JG 26: Top Guns of the Luftwaffe

**Donald Caldwell**

**Orion Books, 1991**

I had the privilege of working with Don Caldwell as he was writing this book and was amazed at the amount of painstaking research he put into *JG 26*. Equally amazing was the quantity and quality of data the survivors of *JG 26* provided to Caldwell. A great read.

### *The Mighty Eighth*

### Gerald Astor

Dell Publishing, 1997

The story of the bombing campaign over Europe, in the words of the bomber and fighter crews of the U.S. Eighth Air Force. Gripping stuff.

**"There are only two types of aircraft: fighters and targets."**

—Major Doyle "Wahoo" Nicholson, USMC fighter pilot

The only hard and fast rule in WWII air combat was that there were no hard and fast rules. Every pilot played to his strengths and avoided his weaknesses. Once you've figured out the basics, experiment and find what works for you. You have a major advantage that your real life counterparts didn't have—the "restart mission" key! **CGW**

*Jeff Lackey has been computer gaming since 1979 and, given the chance, will*

Jeff Lackey has been computer gaming since 1979 and, given the chance, will bore you to death talking about "the good old days" of the Apple II.



**GIVING ORDERS** You can issue squadron orders while engaged in EUROPEAN AIR WAR.



# Railroad Tycoon II

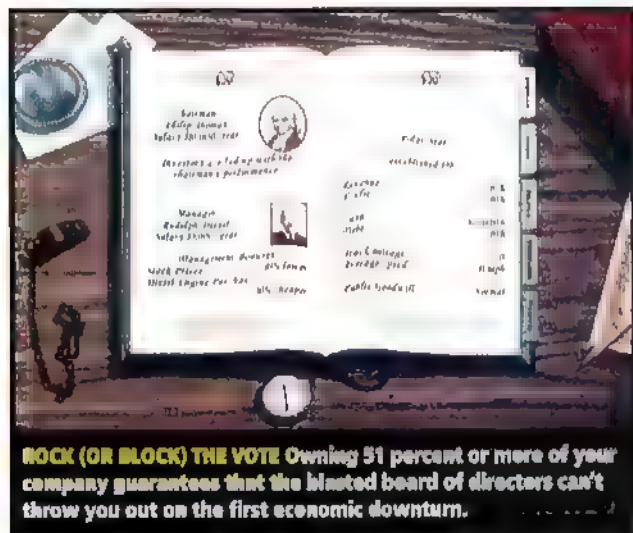
*Don't Tie Those Tracks in Frustration!*

by Samuel Baker II

**W**hile RAILROAD TYCOON II (RRT2) can be a fascinating game, it takes time to master. Part of the reason for this steep learning curve is that RRT2 has a number of unfamiliar concepts, many of which aren't fully explained in the manual. I hope the following will help you keep the trains on time.

## Think Before You Lay

Since laying track and stations is your company's biggest capital outlay, you need to plan things out in detail before committing to anything. It pays to think about which



way stations should be oriented and where you'll want track to run. If your line will be running east to west, for example, you don't want your stations oriented north to south. Ideally, you want traffic to be able to enter both ends of the station, not just one.

Trying to serve large cities that produce and demand multiple

cargoes with one station can result in massive congestion—even with double track. If the funds are available, consider building one or more additional stations to serve different industries. You could establish separate lines, though that is more difficult, since the program will always route trains by what it believes is the shortest distance. If you keep all crossings between the two systems at right angles it should prevent trains from straying.

## Industrial Strength

When you're starting out, don't try to do everything at once. Pick two cities that have complementary demands and run a train between them. For example, you might have cattle in one city and a meat packer in another, letting you run full trains in both directions. As you expand, look for grouped basic industries. Grain is a favorite. Find two or three farms together and look for an area nearby with cattle or dairy farms; if you can carry off the increased milk or cattle production, so much the better.

Buy any industries you intend to serve as soon as you can. Buying key industries ensures they won't disappear. At times a crucial industry will go poof and the great run that produced millions for you is gone. Any industry you own will stay in the game. You'll also make lots of money off of them.

If one of your opponents buys an industry you're serving before you do, quit running trains to support it. Eventually the competitor will give up and sell off; then you can buy the industry back and run trains to it.

Cargo has a shelf life (listed in days on the reference card). Like some manufacturers' warranties, the clock starts as soon as a car's worth of that cargo appears at a station. Cargo value decays even while in transit. If cargo has not been picked up by its expiration date it disappears. If expired cargo is on a train it will stick around until it is sold for its minimum price. The shorter "shelf-life" a cargo has, the steeper its decline in value becomes. When cargoes with multiple "born on" dates are at a station they will be

picked up in "age before beauty" order (oldest to youngest).

Passenger and mail service fluctuate much more with the economy than other cargoes and are too easy to "overserve." It's probably better to leave passenger and mail service alone until you have good engines like the Pacifics and Atlantics that can make long runs quickly.

## Electrifying

You'll see the "train can't reach station" message a lot. There are several different situations that generate that message. Like heart burn, the symptom may represent a minor condition or something more serious. First, trains always show that message for a brief period when they've just been created. If this or any other benign situations have generated this message it will disappear within a few moments.

If the train remains in distress for a protracted period there are three primary suspects: If the engine is electric you probably haven't electrified all of your track, it's easy to miss a spot when

**See the Review**

**MARCH ISSUE • 4.5 STARS**

upgrading. Go into the maximum zoom level and examine the train's route. Check for the electric poles, especially around stations and bridges. On the other hand, you may have accidentally sent your train to a competitor's station not connected to your system. If you put a station next door to his, it's all too easy to do. Or you might be missing a piece of track, especially in the congested areas around stations.

## What Goes Up

The stock market model in RRT2 is complex and requires us to learn about all those nifty phrases we've heard, but never understood. RRT2 also can cause split personality by giving us personal fortunes and goals as well as our company's. Frequently, what's good for General Railways will lose us the scenario.

Pause the game any time you're manipulating the market. Computer players love to take advantage of your position and will do nasty things like buy up all that stock you just had your company issue (and that you intended to buy).

At the beginning you can rest assured that everybody's stock will quickly rise and then split, so you can safely invest in everyone. Buy as much of your stock as you can while still maintaining positive Purchasing Power.

In addition to letting you buy and sell stocks and bonds, RRT2 puts two more double edged swords in your arsenal: buying on margin and selling short. Indulging in either one to excess can have you bleeding like a stuck pig. You can end up owing several millions of dollars and have no assets. In

both cases you're doing something with nothing. Buying on margin lets you continue to acquire stock when you have no cash. Selling short lets you sell stock you don't own.

To do both successfully you have to keep track of your Purchasing Power, the state of the economy, and plans for your railroad's future. Purchasing Power represents the total of all your cash and half the value of any stock you own. Whenever your Purchasing Power becomes negative the broker will call. Your Purchasing Power is listed just underneath your portrait on the stock page.

The tired maxim, "buy low and sell high" has real weight in RRT2. A boom economy is the optimum time to sell stocks or buy bonds. Bond interest rates are the lowest then. If you had to buy bonds in a less enthusiastic climate you should consider turning them over in good times. Buy

enough bonds to repay the ones you have and repay them immediately. Even though you'll pay a penalty for paying off a bond early you'll make that up in a few years from the lower interest payments.

Normally you have to have cash to buy stocks. Once you've used up

all your personal cash in RRT2, you are allowed (when playing at the hard difficulty setting) to buy on margin, where you are essentially taking out a loan with your broker.

He agrees to let you buy stock, using the stock you already own as the collateral.

## Don't Sell Yourself Short

Unless you have a good reason to think that a stock is about to tank, don't sell any stock short. (You can tell when you're buying on margin or selling short if either "buy" or "sell" is in parentheses.) When you sell short you are borrowing stock from the broker again, but this time you immediately sell it. Your short shares will show as a negative number of shares held. Eventually you'll need to buy them back to take a profit.

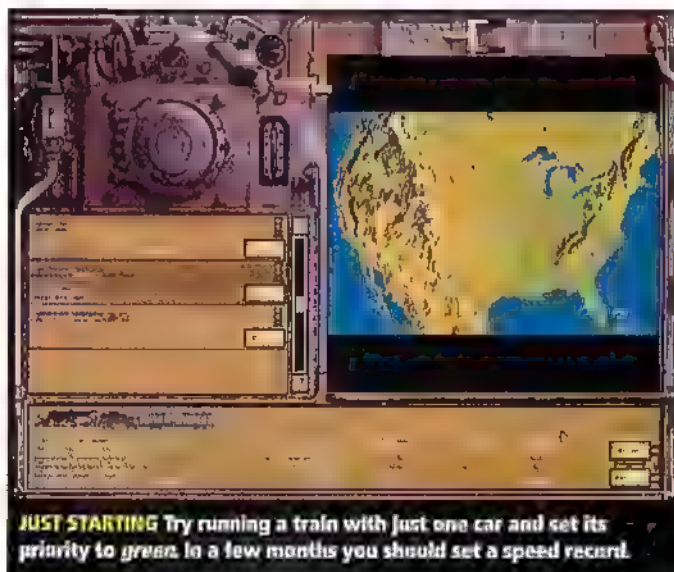
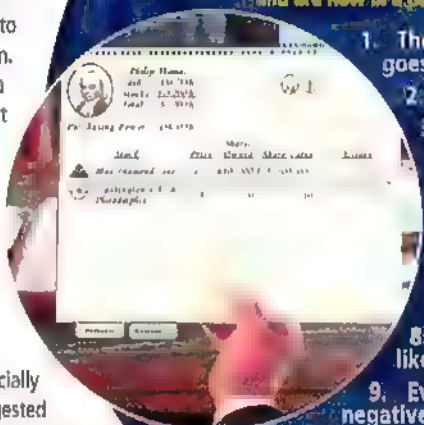
Consider selling short as an offensive tactic to use against other players. For example, if another player has bought a lot of stock on margin and the economy

# The Margin Call Spiral of Doom

**W**atch your purchasing power. Keep it in the black by a comfortable margin—say, \$100k. Buy stock a little at a time, not all at once. If you buy all at once, the price will artificially rise a great deal and thereby inflate your purchasing power—worse still if you take advantage of the increased purchasing power and buy more stock. If you've bought a lot of stock during a boom economy and are now in a panic, you'll risk entering the Margin Call Spiral of Doom.

1. The Spiral of Doom begins when your purchasing power goes negative.
2. The broker calls in your loan.
3. You are "heavily margined," having bought a large amount of stock with credit.
4. You sell some stock to try and dig yourself out.
5. Problem is, selling stock deflates the price of that stock.
6. So, if your stock holdings are in large chunks you will have reduced your purchasing power.
7. You sell more stock.
8. Your purchasing power either doesn't rise or, more likely, drops further.
9. Eventually you've sold all your stock and have negative wealth.

To avoid the downward spiral, limit your stock purchases and spread them out. Instead of selling stock to meet the margin call, have your company buy back some of the outstanding shares. This will raise the stock price and thus your purchasing power. You can also raise the dividend rate to put some cash back in your pocket.

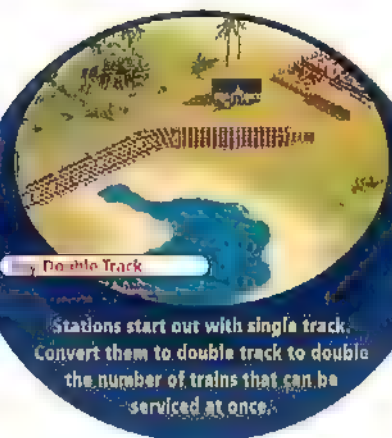






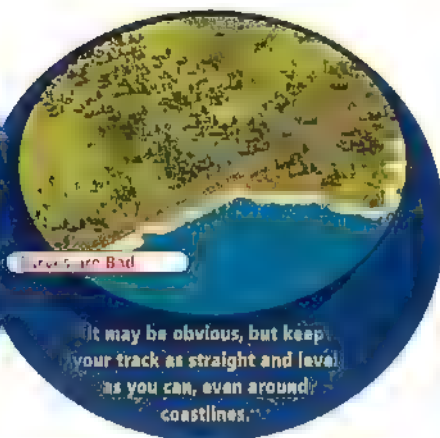
Congestion Headache

Operating multiple stations serving the same area can alleviate a back-up.



Double Track

Stations start out with single track. Convert them to double track to double the number of trains that can be serviced at once.



Curves are Bad

It may be obvious, but keep your track as straight and level as you can, even around coastlines.

has just entered a downturn, sell that company short as much as possible. You may precipitate a margin call and force them out of the company.

You can also use selling short as a scorched-earth tactic. For example, your starting railroad has been doing well, but other players are way ahead of you in shares. Wait until the fall and pause the game. Then sell all your stock. Sell as short as you can. Next, depending on how evil you're feeling, rip up the track and sell off all your engines. Sell as many bonds as you can and use the money to buy up its shares. Un-pause the game and watch the show. This works especially well if the economy is down. The stock will tank and you'll probably sucker the other players into

buying even more of the company. Eventually the stock will drop to a dollar a share. Buy up all the stock (you'll make a fortune on your short shares) and rebuild your railroad. The stock prices will skyrocket as service and profits return. Generally speaking, this isn't as efficient as operating a successful railroad, but it's a lot of fun.

### Personal Worth

The company's making piles of money, but your personal worth is squat. What do you do? Over a long period of time (as described in the Margin Call Spiral of Doom) buy all your company's stock and have your company buy back its stock. These two steps increase your share of the company. Having your company buy back stock

reduces your competitors' shares and boosts the price of your company's stock, which will also help stave off the MCSoD and increase your Purchasing Power. Once you have control of a substantial percentage of the company, crank up those dividends. You will want to have at least 60 percent of the stock before doing this. Remember your competitors will get rich off this too if they own stock in your company.

If it's near the end of a scenario in which part of the victory conditions involve personal wealth, sell as many bonds as you can and increase the dividends even more. As long as your company meets whatever goals are in the scenario, it doesn't matter if it goes belly up one minute after the game ends.

In those scenarios where you can start another railroad company there is a more efficient method of "money laundering" if you

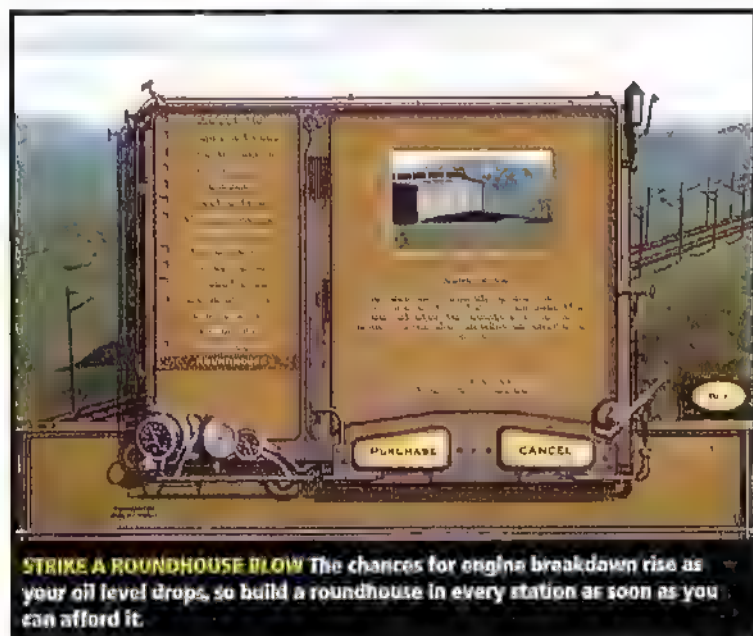


**BE INDUSTRIOUS** Inspect industries in your competitor's cities and buy any of them rated "lucrative" or better.

have a cash-rich railroad in which you are the major stockholder. Start another "shell" railroad with whatever spare change you have lying around. Use only your own money, don't use any outside investors. Don't bother building stations, laying track, etc. Resign as chairman and return as chairman of your starting railroad. Offer to merge with the shell company and pay as much as your railroad can afford. Since you're the sole stockholder the merger will succeed and all that lovely moolah will go into your pocket. You can use this process in reverse to prop up a railroad in trouble, though it requires having a large personal fortune.

Happy trains to you. This is my stop, and I have another market to corner.... **EGW**

*Samuel Baker II returns to the world of fast tracks next issue with a review of RAILROAD 3D MASTER.*



**STRIKE A ROUNDHOUSE BLOW** The chances for engine breakdown rise as your oil level drops, so build a roundhouse in every station as soon as you can afford it.

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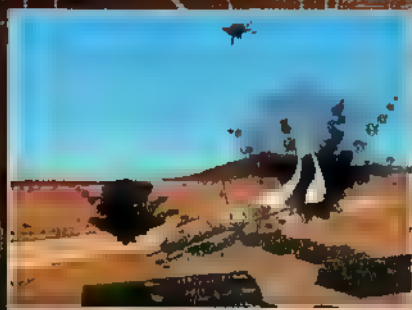
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# Baldur's Gate

## Getting That Party Underway

by Scorpia

**M**ost of these tips apply more to solitary play of BALDUR'S GATE than multiplayer. However, the suggestions on character creation can be of value regardless of how you play the game. Unless noted otherwise, "thief" includes bard, "fighter" includes paladin and ranger, and "cleric" includes Druid.

### Character Development

Given that BALDUR'S experience cap keeps you from advancing very far, you'll want to have the best possible character right off the bat. Single-classes will peak at level 7 (8 for thieves), multiclassed peak at either 6/6 or 6/7, depending on the mix.

Everyone should have dexterity of 18, if possible. This is an immediate four-point improvement in armor class, and is especially valuable for characters limited to little or no armor, such as thieves and mages. Anything that makes you harder to hit is worth having. For any character with thieving abilities, 18 is again the dexterity to shoot for.

For nonfighters, a constitution of 16 is sufficient; higher doesn't do much for you. Fighters should aim for a constitution of 17 or 18, to gain the extra hit-point bonus per level. The front lines can be pretty rugged in this game.

As regards strength, fighters should have at least 18/51 or better, both for the plus to hit and the extra damage. A high strength (14 or more) is also handy for clerics, since they, like fighters, can wear the heavy armor, such as plate mail. If you plan on having your cleric fight often, bring

the strength up to 17 or 18 for maximum benefit.

Wisdom is important, primarily for clerics, and should be 18 for that class. In particular, it allows the cleric to memorize extra spells of each level, and we can all use the extra healing. Likewise, mages should come with 18 intelligence.

Charisma is not as important in the game as reputation, so you can get by easily with only an average (10+) score in this stat.

### Have Some Class

I don't recommend multiclassing in the solo version; there are far too many drawbacks involved. Advancement is slower, and the restrictions on armor and weapons make the character less efficient in either class. This is especially true when combining fighter with mage. You can't cast spells in armor of any kind, and a fighter without armor is a dead duck. Unless you plan on hanging out in the back ranks with no armor and a bow, this is a combination to avoid.



Fighter with cleric is somewhat better, since you can wear the good armor, and still cast spells. Unfortunately, weapons are limited in this case to only what a cleric can wield, and that leaves out bows of all kinds. So this character can fight a little better than a regular cleric, but that's about all.

In the same way, dual classing for human characters should be avoided. There is an overall experience cap of 89,000 in the game (as noted when you go to the dual class screen). That means you must switch classes fairly early on, thereby limiting your abilities in the original class, and even when the new class exceeds the old, you're stuck with the same drawbacks a multiclass character has. Definitely not a good thing.

Generally, you are best off with a single-class character, although you can also try multiclassing later on when you're familiar with the

game, and have a good idea of who will be in the party overtime.

Regarding weapon proficiencies, fighters get a star every three levels; thieves and clerics every four levels, and mages every six levels. This includes multiclass, who get a star at the appropriate level for whichever class gives the most beneficial results; e.g., a fighter/something combo gets a star every three levels, while a cleric/mage gets one every fourth level. Keep in mind that fighters combined with another class cannot go beyond two stars in any weapon type.

Fighters do well by starting with two stars in Large Sword, one in Bow, and the fourth into whatever else you please. At levels 3 and 6, put the stars into Large Sword. The better weapons are always swords, so make the most of that by advancing in this specialty.

Thieves should choose Small Sword and Bow. Since armor for this class is limited, it's better to stay back and use arrows whenever possible.

Clerics take Missile Weapons and either Blunt or Spiked Weapons. Druids should take Missile Weapons and Small Sword. Taking Small Sword will allow the Druid to use that very nice Dagger of Venom for sale in Beregost (once you can afford it). Blunt weapons will limit the Druid to only Club or Quarterstaff, neither an especially great weapon.

Mages should take missile weapons. This allows for using darts and slings, thus keeping the mage in the back, where such characters belong. "Back" is, however, a relative term. Monsters can attack from any angle; don't expect them to always be coming from the front. That's another reason everyone (not just your personal character!) should have the best armor possible.

Non-magical weapons in this game, especially swords, break



**POINTED STAR** It's just as important to have proper "marching order" in outdoor combat situations as it is inside dungeons or castles. Note how our magic user in the back rank is sufficiently shielded by the fighters up front, so that he has plenty of time to cast his spell. Our cleric (in the stylish robe) covers the flank and any surprises from the rear.

See the Review

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fairly often; all fighter types should carry at least two weapons on their belts at all times. Once a character acquires a magical weapon (+1 or better), you won't have to worry about that anymore. Until then, be prepared with backups.

### A Side-questing We Will Go?

Once you have a full party of six, be careful of which quests you accept (it's wise to save

shouldn't be in a hurry to follow up on the story. For one thing, you probably won't be powerful enough to handle the opposition if you go too fast.

So, take your time and explore the side areas. These start showing up on your world map when you exit a location to the east or west (sometimes north



before talking to people in this game!). Sometimes, the person with a job to be done wants to join the group, and then you must drop one of your own regulars to make room for him or her. Jaheira and Khalid are a pair, and dropping one means dropping both. Branwen doesn't take kindly to being "cast off," either. The Nashkell-mine mage is usually the best bet for temporary drop-off, but you'll be out his spellcasting ability for the duration.

Then again, these "joiner" quests are not a part of the main storyline, so declining them won't prevent you from moving on with the game. There is plenty to do in the game, and going out on every little quest is not necessary.

Speaking of which, the main line primarily follows the mines/bandits until you get into Baldur's Gate. Most everything else is extra, designed for experience and finding the occasional neat item or two. There is no rush here, and you

or south, also, depending where you are). You don't usually need anyone to tell you about them; most will just be there when you leave an area.

Some people will ask you to find their missing/stolen items, such as the Boots of Stealth or the Belt of Piercing. By all means, find these things, just don't return them. You need this stuff far more than they do, and the rewards for bringing them back are paltry at best. Remember, you're saving the world, and they're just sitting around doing nothing important.

### To Arms, Men (and Women)

Handling combat with six characters in quasi-realtime can be difficult until you get the hang of it. There are two

### Who's in the Party?



Imoen, your childhood pal, is with you almost from the start, and provides thief abilities. Bring up her skills in Lockpicking and Find Traps as she advances in level.



Jaheira and Khalid, at the Friendly Arms Inn, are also good to have for the long term. At the carnival east of Nashkell, you can buy a stone-to-flesh scroll for 500 gold and de-petrify Branwen the cleric, another good addition to the



party. Note that clerics and Druids have slightly different spells, so one of each in the group is a good thing.



If your character is not a mage, you may want to pick up the spellcaster you rescue at the end of the Nashkell mines. Otherwise, it may be a very longtime before you find someone else who is a mage to join your group. Even if you are a mage yourself, having a second spellcaster won't hurt.

Fairly late in the game, in the Cloakwood Forest, you'll meet Coran, a fighter/thief. He is the supreme Archer, and also excellent at Lockpicking. If you have a spot open, he's well worth taking on.



types of combat, the general outdoor encounter and the set-piece.

In general encounters, fighting begins when something hostile targets a party member. This is always mentioned in the text, so

hit pause as soon as such messages appear. Scroll the map to see where the monsters are coming from, and how many there are. You may need to move some people around to get them out of





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**HEROES CAST IN STONE** In all D&D games—BALDUR'S GATE is no exception—statues are more than they seem, and it might be a good idea to cast Dispel Magic here.

harm's way, especially if weaker characters are the target.

Against just a couple of opponents, setting the whole party against one at a time can kill them off quickly. Against multiple monsters, advance the fighters to head the critters off and keep them occupied while other party members use missile weapons or spells. I usually have an auto-pause set for "target gone," which is especially helpful during large fights.

Normally, the NPC members (any character other than your own) automatically choose another target when their current one is gone, and you can just leave them to it. However, there are times when you may want to redirect attacks to a specific opponent, and auto-pause lets you do that without having to hit the space bar all the time.

The set piece is where you have one or more opponents waiting especially for you, and one of them has something to say before fighting starts. You can't sneak up on them, although if you're fast enough, you can hit pause and direct your spellcasters to start some magic going. After conversation ends, your people will continue with their spells. This is another good place to pause, so you can direct physical attacks against specific opponents.

Spellcasters are the toughest opponents. Mage types invariably cast either Mirror Image or

Invisibility before you can stop them. Physical attacks will eventually destroy the images (you have to get all of those before you can hit the mage). You can also try area effect spells, such as Fireball, or Dispel Magic to remove the images. Command may also work in this situation. Against invisible enemies, Purge Invisibility is the spell of choice.

Silence, with its 15-foot effect radius, can prevent opponents from doing nasty things to your party. Web is another good spell, though it takes a little practice to use properly; webbed opponents of all kinds are helpless while trapped (this is much better than entangle, which only stops movement, not spells or physical attacks). Hold Person can also be effective against difficult opponents.

Your people who are held, confused, charmed, and the like, can often be brought back to normal with Dispel Magic or Remove Paralysis. Be sure to have a few of those spells always memorized. Charm is especially nasty, as the victim will immediately start attacking someone in the party, and the party members will attack him or her in return. So, undo that effect as soon as possible, then pause the game and redirect everyone's attacks to the proper opponents; sometimes, it takes a while for the group to realize the person has been restored.

It won't be long before you start coming across set pieces with more

than one enemy, usually a spellcaster or two, as well as tough fighters. You'll live longer if you take them out one at a time. The "tiptoe" technique is good for this.

Basically, you just move very slowly so as the darkness rolls back on the map, only one enemy is revealed, then stop. If it's an ordinary fighter, let him come to you. If it's a mage, use missile weapons and spells as necessary. The important thing here is *not* to move farther along, uncovering more opponents before you're ready. One spellcaster and a couple of friends (sometimes, even just one magic-user) can easily trash your whole group.

Keep an eye on the right-hand portraits during combat. Your party members have no sense of self-preservation, and will fight to the death if you let them. Anyone severely injured should be moved away from the fighting and given some healing if you can manage it. While dead companions can be resurrected later, they drop everything they're

carrying, which can make for problems. Also, anyone who dies from poison or fire is gone for good, and can't be raised from the dead; their portraits disappear from the list. Ouch!

Finally, save often. You never know what may turn up in the next few steps. Bounty hunters after your scalp can show up anywhere, not just in town. A group of unusually powerful monsters may be sitting around in an area populated by weak ones. Anything can happen out there, much of it nasty. Walk with care and be prepared at all times. **CGW**

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WELCOME TO THE COOPERSTOWN OF COMPUTER GAMES. These are the games that broke the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for hours untold.

## Hall of Fame—New Inductees

**Alone in the Dark** (I-Motion, 1992)

**The Bard's Tale** (EA, 1985)

**Battle Chess** (Interplay, 1988)

**Betrayal at Krondor** (Dynamix, 1993)

**Chessmaster** (Software Toolworks, 1986)

**Command & Conquer**  
(Virgin/Westwood 1995)

**Day of the Tentacle** (LucasArts, 1993)

**DOOM** (id Software, 1993)

**Dungeon Master** (FTL Software, 1987)

**Earl Weaver Baseball** (EA, 1986)

**Empire** (Interstel, 1978)

**F-19 Stealth Fighter**  
(MicroProse, 1988)

**Falcon 3.0** (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)

**Front Page Sports Football Pro**  
(Dynamix, 1993)

**Gettysburg: The Turning Point**  
(SSI, 1986)

**Gunship** (MicroProse, 1986)

**Harpoon** (360 Pacific, 1989)

**Kampfgruppe** (SSI, 1985)

**King's Quest V** (Sierra On-Line, 1990)

**Lemmings** (Psygnosis, 1991)

**Links 386 Pro** (Access Software, 1992)

**M-1 Tank Platoon** (MicroProse, 1989)

**Master of Magic** (MicroProse, 1994)

**Master of Orion** (MicroProse, 1993)

**Mech Brigade** (SSI, 1985)

**MechWarrior 2** (Activision, 1995)

**Might & Magic**  
(New World Computing, 1986)

**M.U.L.E.** (EA, 1983)



### **Tetris** (Spectrum HoloByte, 1988)

If there ever really was a communist plot to destroy American productivity, it was the Soviet-developed TETRIS. It was a simple little game in which you tried to line blocks up into rows as they ceaselessly fell from the sky. Success was rewarded only by the occasional change of a crudely drawn Russian-themed background and the ever-quicken pace of falling blocks.

It was such a simple game with few rewards, yet somehow we never stopped playing it. The EGA version still sits on a number of hard drives in our offices. We bought Gameboys to play TETRIS on plane flights. We installed TETRIS on our laptops. We kept ancient Alan ST's running long past their prime as dedicated TETRIS workstations. We revel

in the fact that we look like we're working when we play TETRIS on our PalmPilots in really boring meetings. The blocks keep coming, and someone has to put them in their places. We can't walk away.

So TETRIS has been belatedly inducted into the Hall of Fame. Maybe, finally, those dreams we've all had of falling blocks from the sky will at last stop. Or at least they'll move on to the next level.



### **Quake** (id Software, 1996)

After QUAKE's revolutionary mouselook concept, first-person shooters would never be the same. Suddenly, the enemy could rain destruction down (or up) on you from any direction. This left gamers not only jumping out of their chairs as they played the game, but also had them creeping around corners in the real world long after their PCs had been shut down. The dreaded hiss of a Scrag had you instantly searching the skies in a desperate attempt to kill before being killed, and Shambler made us quiver with fear.

Still, QUAKE owes its status as the definitive action-game benchmark to its incredible Death-Match play, which at the time offered the ultimate outlet for office-wide (and Internet-wide) aggression. We can think of few joys in life more satisfying than brutally turning fellow CGW Editor Dave Salvador into a pile of bloody chunks and reveling in his tortured cries of "Nooooooooooooooooo!" and "Camping Ho!" QUAKE immersed us in fantastic killing fields like no game before it, and it still holds up after all these years.

**Panzer General** (SSI, 1994)

**Red Baron** (Dynamix, 1990)

**The Secret of Monkey Island**  
(LucasArts, 1990)

**Sid Meier's Civilization**  
(MicroProse, 1991)

**Sid Meier's Pirates** (MicroProse, 1987)

**Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon**  
(MicroProse, 1990)

**SimCity** (Maxis, 1987)

**Starflight** (EA, 1986)

**Their Finest Hour** (LucasArts, 1989)

**TIE Fighter** (LucasArts, 1994)

**Ultima III** (Origin Systems, 1983)

**Ultima IV** (Origin Systems, 1985)

**Ultima VI** (Origin Systems, 1990)

**Ultima Underworld**  
(Origin Systems, 1992)

**War in Russia** (SSI, 1984)

**WarCraft II** (Blizzard, 1996)

**Wasteland** (Interplay, 1986)

**Wing Commander**  
(Origin Systems, 1990)

**Wing Commander II**  
(Origin Systems, 1991)

**Wing Commander III**  
(Origin Systems, 1994)

**Wizardry** (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)

**Wolfenstein 3-D** (id Software, 1992)

**X-COM** (MicroProse, 1994)

**You Don't Know Jack**  
(Berkeley Systems, 1996)

**Zork** (Infocom, 1981)



## CGW'S MONTHLY READERS' POLL

**E**ach month, 2,000 CGW subscribers are selected at random to rate 100 computer games. The results of that poll are combined with the results of previous months to yield a cumulative average for the best plays in gaming. If you receive a ballot, please return it with your ratings so that other gamers and game publishers can benefit from your feedback.



### TOP ACTION GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Shogun: Mobile Armor Division Monolith	8.56	3.5
2	2	Quake II Activision	8.47	4.5
3	3	Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II LucasArts	8.46	4.5
4	4	Quake Pack 1: Armagon id Software/Ritual	8.45	4.5
5	4	Quake Pack 2: Dissolution id Software/Rogue	8.44	5
6	7	Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith LucasArts	8.32	4
7	6	Quake II Pack 2: Ground Zero Activision	8.30	3.5
8	8	Unreal GT Interactive	8.29	4
9	9	Rainbow 6 Red Storm	8.12	3.5
10	10	Quake II Pack: The Reckoning id Software/Activision	7.98	3.5



### TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Curse of Monkey Island LucasArts	8.21	5
2	2	Sanitarium ASC Games	7.76	4.5
3	3	Twinsen's Odyssey Activision	7.67	5
4	4	Zork: Grand Inquisitor Activision	7.60	N/R
5	5	Blade Runner Virgin/Westwood	7.59	4.5
6	6	Realms of the Haunting Interplay	7.44	4.5
7	7	Last Express Red Orb	7.40	4.5
8	-	Leisure Suit Larry 7 Sierra	7.31	4
9	9	Black Dahlia Interplay	7.07	3
10	-	Riven Red Orb	7.00	5



### TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	You Don't Know Jack 2 Berkeley Systems	8.18	4.5
2	3	You Don't Know Jack Movies Berkeley Systems	7.93	4.5
3	2	You Don't Know Jack 3 Berkeley Systems	7.91	4
4	4	Smart Games Challenge 2 Smart Games Inc.	7.79	5
5	-	Worms 2 MicroProse	7.79	4
6	6	You Don't Know Jack TV Berkeley Systems	7.70	2.5
7	7	You Don't Know Jack Sports Berkeley Systems	7.43	4.5
8	9	Shanghai Dynasty Activision	7.22	3
9	-	Magic: Duels of the Planeswalker MicroProse	6.87	3.5
10	9	Lose Your Marbles SegaSoft	6.62	4.5



### TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Longbow 2 EA	8.43	5
2	2	Wing Commander: Prophecy Origin	8.33	4.5
3	3	F-15 EA/Origin	8.16	4.5
4	4	F-22 ADF D/D	7.71	4.5
5	6	Fighters Anthology EA	7.68	3.5
6	7	MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries Activision	7.58	4.5
7	5	Independence War Ocean	7.55	5
8	9	Flight Unlimited 2 Looking Glass	7.55	4.5
9	8	Descent: Freespace Interplay	7.52	4
10	-	Flight Simulator 98 Microsoft	7.45	5



### TOP SPORTS/RACING GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	NHL 98 EA Sports	8.61	4
2	5	Need for Speed III EA	8.35	5
3	2	World Cup 98 EA Sports	8.33	4.5
4	3	FIFA Road to World Cup 98 EA Sports	8.31	4.5
5	3	NBA Live 98 EA Sports	8.31	4.5
6	6	Motocross Madness Microsoft	8.13	4.5
7	7	Jack Nicklaus 5 Accolade	8.01	5
8	8	Madden NFL '99 EA Sports	7.92	4.5
9	10	Diamond Mind Baseball 2.0 Diamond Mind	7.64	3.5
10	-	NFL Gameday 99 EA Sports	7.55	3



### TOP STRATEGY GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty 3DO/New World	8.95	5
2	2	StarCraft Blizzard	8.80	5
3	3	TA: Core Contingency Cavedog	8.73	4.5
4	4	Total Annihilation GT Interactive	8.23	4.5
5	5	Red Alert: Counterstrike Virgin/Westwood	8.14	4
6	7	StarCraft: Insurrection BlueByte	8.02	3.5
7	8	Age of Empires: Rise of Rome Microsoft	8.00	4
8	9	Age of Empires Microsoft	7.97	4.5
9	6	Total Annihilation: Battle Tactics Cavedog	7.94	3.5
10	-	Civilization II: Fantastic Worlds	7.72	4



### TOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Might and Magic VI 3DO/New World	8.84	4.5
2	2	Fallout Interplay	8.34	4.5
3	3	Final Fantasy VII Eidos/Squaresoft	8.22	4
4	4	Hellfire Sierra	7.83	4
5	-	Dark Earth MicroProse	6.65	3.5
6	5	Shadows Over Riva Sir-Tech	6.60	N/R
7	6	Rage of Mages Monolith	6.33	3
8	7	Lands of Lore II Westwood	6.16	N/R
9	8	Meridian 59 3DO	5.41	3.5
10	9	Ultima Online Origin	4.82	1.5



### TOP WARGAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Steel Panthers II Camp. DiskSSI	8.30	4.5
2	2	Panzer General II SSI	8.25	5
3	3	The Operational Art of War TalonSoft	8.24	4.5
4	4	Sid Meier's Gettysburg Fraxis	7.99	4.5
5	5	Steel Panthers II SSI	7.96	4.5
6	8	People's General SSI	7.80	3
7	7	Battleground: Bull Run TalonSoft	7.75	4
8	6	Battleground: Napoleon in Russia TalonSoft	7.72	4.5
9	11	Great Battles of Julius Caesar Interactive Magic	7.51	4
10	10	Steel Panthers III SSI	7.27	3

Games on unnumbered lines are tied with game on line above ★ = Top game of genre. Red = New Game. AD = Adventure, RP = Role-Playing, SI = Simulation/Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

THIS MO.	LAST MO.	GAME/ PUBLISHER	GAME GENRE	POLL SCORE	CGW RATING
★	1	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty New World Computing	ST	8.95	5
★	2	Might and Magic VI 3DO/New World	RP	8.84	4.5
	3	StarCraft Blizzard	ST	8.80	5
	4	Total Annihilation: Core Contingency Cavedog	ST	8.73	4.5
★	5	NHL 98 EA Sports	SP	8.61	4
★	6	Shogo: Mobile Armor Division Monolith	AC	8.56	3.5
	7	Quake II Activision	AC	8.47	4.5
	8	Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II LucasArts	AC	8.46	4.5
	9	Quake Pack 1: Armagon id Software/Ritual	AC	8.45	4.5
	10	Quake Pack 2: Dissolution id Software/Rogue	AC	8.44	5
★	11	Longbow 2 EA/Jane's	SI	8.43	5
	12	Need for Speed III EA	SP	8.35	5
	13	Fallout Interplay	RP	8.34	4.5
	14	World Cup 98 EA Sports	SP	8.33	4.5
	— 15	Wing Commander: Prophecy Origin	SI	8.33	1.5
	16	Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith LucasArts	AC	8.32	4
	17	FIFA 98: Road to the World Cup EA Sports	SP	8.31	4.5
	— 17	NBA Live 98 EA Sports	SP	8.31	1.5
★	19	Steel Panthers II Campaign Disk SSI	WG	8.30	4.5
	— 13	Quake II Pack 2: Ground Zero Activision	AC	8.30	3.5
	21	Unreal GT Interactive	AC	8.29	1
	22	Panzer General II SSI	WG	8.25	5
	23	The Operational Art of War TalonSoft	WG	8.24	4.5
	24	Total Annihilation GT Interactive	ST	8.23	4.5
	25	Final Fantasy VII Eidos	RP	8.22	4
★	26	Curse of Monkey Island LucasArts	AD	8.21	5
★	27	You Don't Know Jack 2 Berkeley Systems	CP	8.18	4.5
	28	F-15 EA/Origin	SI	8.16	4.5
	29	Red Alert: Counterstrike Westwood	ST	8.13	1
	30	Motocross Madness Microsoft	SP	8.13	4.5
	31	Rainbow 6 Red Storm	AC	8.12	3.5
	32	StarCraft: Insurrection BlueByte	ST	8.02	3.5
	33	Jack Nicklaus 5 Accolade	SP	8.01	5
	34	Age of Empires: Rise of Rome Microsoft	ST	8.00	4
	35	Sid Meier's Gettysburg EA/Traxis	WG	7.99	4.5
	36	Quake II Pack: The Reckoning id Software/Activision	AC	7.98	3.5
	37	Age of Empires Microsoft	ST	7.91	4.5
	38	Steel Panthers II SSI	WG	7.96	4.5
	39	Total Annihilation: Battle Tactics Cavedog	ST	7.94	3.5
	40	You Don't Know Jack Movies Berkeley Systems	CP	7.93	4.5
	41	Madden NFL 99 EA Sports	SP	7.92	4.5
	42	You Don't Know Jack 3 Berkeley Systems	CP	7.91	4
	43	Civilization II: Fantastic Worlds MicroProse	ST	7.83	4
	— 45	Hellfire Sierra	RP	7.83	4
	45	People's General SSI	WG	7.80	3
	46	Smart Games Challenge 2 Smart Games Inc	CP	7.79	5
	— 48	Worms 2 MicroProse	CP	7.79	4
	48	Sanitarium ASC Games	AD	7.76	4.5
	49	Battleground: Bull Run TalonSoft	WG	7.75	4
	50	Caesar III Sierra	ST	7.74	4.5

THIS MO.	LAST MO.	GAME/ PUBLISHER	GAME GENRE	POLL SCORE	CGW RATING
	51	Warlords III: Darklords Rising Red Orb/SSI	ST	7.73	4.5
	52	Battleground: Napoleon in Russia TalonSoft	WG	7.72	4.5
	53	Moto Racer EA	AC	7.71	4
	— 54	F22 ADF NovaLogic	S	7.71	4.5
	55	You Don't Know Jack TV Berkeley Systems	CP	7.70	2.5
	56	Tomb Raider II Eidos	AC	7.69	4
	57	Fighters Anthology EA	SI	7.68	3.5
	58	Twinsen's Odyssey Activision	AD	7.67	5
	59	Diamond Mind Baseball 7.0 Diamond Mind	SP	7.64	3.5
	60	Zork: Grand Inquisitor Activision	AD	7.60	N/R
	61	Blade Runner Westwood/Virgin	AD	7.59	4.5
	— 66	NFL Gameday 99 989 Studios/Sony	SP	7.59	3
	63	Tripleplay 99 EA Sports	SP	7.58	2.5
	— 66	MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries Activision	SI	7.58	4.5
	65	Independence War Ocean	SI	7.55	5
	— 68	Battlezone Activision	AC	7.55	5
	— 68	Flight Unlimited 2 Looking Glass	SI	7.55	4.5
	68	Dungeon Keeper Expansion EA/Bullfrog	ST	7.54	4.5
	69	MechCommander MicroProse	S	7.53	4
	70	Descent: Freespace—The Great War Interplay	S	7.52	4
	71	Great Battles of Julius Caesar Interactive Magic	WG	7.51	4
	72	Myth Bungie	ST	7.46	4.5
	73	F1 Racing Simulation Ubi Soft	SP	7.45	5
	74	Realms of the Haunting Interplay	AD	7.44	4.5
	75	You Don't Know Jack Sports Berkeley Systems	CP	7.43	4.5
	76	Triple Play 98 EA Sports	SP	7.42	3
	77	Last Express Red Orb	AD	7.40	4.5
	78	Interstate 76 Activision	AC	7.39	4.5
	79	Baseball Mogul Infinite Monkey	SP	7.36	4
	80	Dungeon Keeper EA/Bullfrog	SI	7.35	4.5
	81	Virtual Pool 2 Interplay	SP	7.3	4.5
	82	Flight Simulator 98 Microsoft	SI	7.30	3.5
	83	Steel Panthers III SSI	WG	7.27	3
	84	M1 Tank Platoon II MicroProse	S	7.26	3.5
	85	PGA Tour Pro EA Sports	SP	7.24	3.5
	86	Age of Rifles Campaign Disk SSI	WG	7.23	4
	87	Shanghai Dynasty Activision	CP	7.22	3
	88	Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far Microsoft/Atomic	WG	7.20	4.5
	89	Achtung! Spitfire Avalon Hill	WG	7.19	5
	90	— Leisure Suit Larry 7 SSI	—	7.17	2.5
	— 96	X-COM: Apocalypse MicroProse	ST	7.16	4
	92	Commandos Eidos	ST	7.15	2.5
	93	MDK Playmates/Shiny	AC	7.13	4.5
	94	— FPS Football Pro 97 Sierra	SI	7.10	4.5
	95	— Panzer Commander SSI	—	7.09	4
	96	94 Uprising 3DO	AC	7.08	4
	97	100 Black Dahlia Interplay	AD	7.07	3
	98	— Hoxen II Activision	—	7.07	3.5
	99	— Shadows of the Empire EA	—	6.92	2.5
	100	— Raven Red Orb	—	6.9	1.5



# Planet of the Geeks

Or, Yo, Pencil Neck—This Is Our World Now!

**H**i, my name is Jeff, and I am a geek.

Chances are high that you too, now holding this magazine, are also a geek. Call it a hunch. Just to be sure, though, so I'm certain we're speaking the same language, please take a moment to answer True or False to the following statements:

1. I think that anyone who says that Kirk/Picard (take your pick) was the better Enterprise captain is an ill-informed moron and poseur with no understanding whatsoever of the qualities necessary to be a leader in interplanetary space travel and conflict management.

2. I know how to use the phrase "RAM cache" in a sentence.

3. I am afraid to read my comic books out of fear that I'll bend the pages and lower their value.

4. The toughest and most important decision I've made so far this year was deciding whether to be a halfling or half-elf in BA, OUR'S GATE.

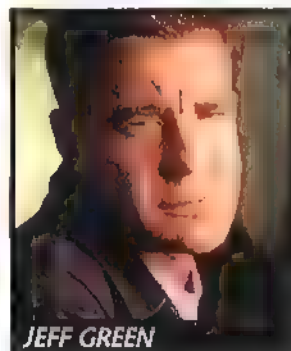
5. I have named one of my pets, children, or body parts "Frodo."

I'd say answering True to any one of these puts you squarely on Team Geek.

But don't worry. I'm not putting you through this process to make fun of you. On the contrary. Other people may laugh at you or kick sand in your face, but not me. You're always welcome here at

Chez Greenspeak, as long as you observe the rules: No speaking in Klingon, no yammering on about the new *Star Wars* movie, no loud public recitations of Monty Python routines. Also, I'll have to ask you to keep away from my daughter:

So now that we know where we stand, I would like to address



I have **named** one of my **pets**, children, or **body** parts "Frodo."

the gallery. I would like to say that of late, as I have wandered this great land of ours, I have heard lots of grumbling and naysaying from my fellow gaming geeks. And I must say, friends, that it disturbs me. What I have heard is resistance, resentment, and repulsion toward the hordes of unwashed "normal" people now flooding the gates of our Fortress of Dorkitude.

We see them buying copies of RIVEN and DEER HUNTER, and we do not like what we see. We say to one another: "That is not a real game! These are not real

gamers!" And we wish to drive them away, to send them back to their world of Range Rovers and outdoor barbecues and Yanni CDs. But I wish to say, friends, that this is wrong. Just as Zera must kiss Taylor at the end of *Planet of the Apes*, we must embrace these people, as unpleasant as it might be.

Why? Because we won. Because they are living in our world now. Because, in just two short decades, The Geek has been radically transformed from picked-upon social reject to admired prince of the new world order. And with such power comes responsibility.

As someone who grew up in the fetid cultural dungheap of

the San Fernando Valley in the 1970s, I'm here to testify: The Geek has not always had it so good. It was not hip to be square—it was an invitation to an ass-kicking. Studied sullenness was the order of the day. Brains were not valued. The coolest guys in the school were those glassy-eyed mouth-breathers who majored in wood shop and played air guitar to "Cat Scratch Fever." Displaying even the slightest interest in something like a computer was tantamount to showing up at school in "I Love Mommy" underwear.

But it's all changed now. Suddenly, there are rock bands with Web sites and TV commercials for Pentium II chips and junior-high kids with home networks. We won, you see? And the more people converted to the cause, the more power we have. The more people play computer games, the more the world works the way we want it to.

It's easy to laugh at people who play games we think are "beneath" us or scoff at those who don't have the same on-so-important gaming knowledge. But once we start playing with the politics of exclusion, well, then we're just as bad as the lummoxes who broke our glasses. Any game that gets someone behind a computer—thinking, analyzing—is a good thing.

So lighten up, Poindexter. Geeks have never had it so good. Let the Wal Mart crowd play their hunting games, and stop being a snob about it. With some encouragement from us, they'll come around to STARCRAFT, HALF-LIFE, and ALPHA CENTAURI.

And when they do—then we kick their bumpkin asses. **GGW**

What Jeff doesn't realize is that neither Kirk nor Picard could have handled *Seven of Nine* without ending up in a sexual harassment court-martial. Call him a poseur at [jhgreen@zd.com](mailto:jhgreen@zd.com)

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